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Barley Loaves.—Frontispiece.



"They don't spend much money."

p. 62.

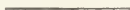
BARLEY LOAVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"RUTH ALLERTON," "CHRISTMAS WITH THE BOYS,"

"SANDY CAMERON," "HALF A DOZEN BOYS,"

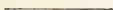
"HALF A DOZEN GIRLS," "A PACK-
AGE OF SEEDS," ETC.



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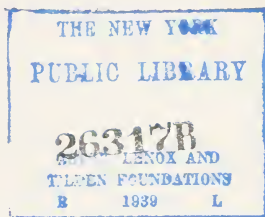
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

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BARLEY LOAVES.

CHAPTER I.

CASSIE MACAULEY.

THE sunshine of a Sabbath afternoon in June pushed its way boldly through the branches of a row of maples, and, like a visitor on terms of perfect familiarity with the inmates, he strode across the floor of the Kronedale Sunday-school room, making a line of brightness all the way from the door to the platform on which stood the superintendent, giving out a hymn. The sunshine of a Sabbath afternoon was on the children's faces too as they rose with one accord and began to sing :

“Come and join the glorious army, praising God below,
Singing still the songs of Zion, joyful as we go ;
With a steadfast hope in Jesus, who has triumphed o’er
the grave,
Our trust is in his mighty arm, the strong to save.

He shall reign for ever, glory to his name ;
Shout aloud, ye nations all ! wondrous love proclaim ;
He has died to save us, died to make us free,
Blessed Saviour, King of glory, praise to thee."

This was a favourite hymn with the boys of Kronedale Sunday-school ; and when they came to the line—

"Shout aloud, ye nations all !"

how they did shout ! just as if they thought that their little lungs could do duty for all the unknown nations. The sunshine crept over the good superintendent's face as he listened, and in his heart he prayed, "Dear Jesus, if thou wilt but suffer these little ones to come a step nearer to thee in the words they are singing, glory to thy name."

These last words of his prayer came in just the right place in the hymn, so he lifted his voice with theirs, and helped the boys through with their final—

"Shout aloud, ye nations all ! wondrous love proclaim !"

Presently the afternoon work began, and there was a pleasant hum all over the room. The frolicsome boys in the corner appeared to be satisfied with having sung so lustily, and



were now quite docile as their teacher entered upon the day's lesson.

On a seat near the door five young girls sat, each taking a last eager look at their Bible verses. At a word from the lady in front of them the books were closed, and each in her turn repeated a portion of the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John; for the lesson that day was on the miracle Christ wrought in feeding five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fishes.

"Miss Dacre," said one of the girls, "isn't it odd that Mr. Powell should have preached this morning about this? I wonder if he knew that he was taking up our lesson?"

"Perhaps he did," Miss Dacre replied, "and wanted to help us in our study of it. By the way, Marion, what can you tell me about the sermon?"

It was a custom of Miss Dacre's to ask each member of her class some question about the sermon last heard, that she might find what impression had been made thereby, and if possible follow it up by her own instructions and prayers. To-day the answers she got were various. The girls all remembered the divisions of the subject, and a sentence or two

here and there ; but evidently no new impulse had been given to their hearts by Mr. Powell's discourse. So at least Miss Dacre feared as one answered and another, until she came to the last one of the five.

" Well, Cassie, was there anything in the sermon which gave you a new thought for this week ?"

Cassie Macauley was a plump little girl with great brown eyes that were thought very pretty by the few people that ever got a good look at them. If any one glanced at Cassie, down went the lids and up came the blood into her round cheeks, and her very dimples seemed to flicker and try to get out of the way. When Miss Dacre addressed her with these words, Cassie looked down at the floor, where the sunshine had established itself in a broad line of brightness, and the dimples twinkled nervously ; but Miss Dacre was used to these bashful ways, and waited a moment for her to regain her composure. Presently Cassie drew from her Bible a folded paper and handed it to her teacher, but she uttered not a word. Miss Dacre opened it and smiled. " May I read it aloud, Cassie ?" she asked.

" Oh yes, do," exclaimed two or three voices.

"It's some of Cassie's poetry," said Kate Morris, her special friend, "and she does write sweetly for one so young. That's just what Professor Merrill said about her last composition—those very words."

"I *will* tell; you need not pinch me," said Kate, turning to blushing Cassie as she spoke.

"Be quiet, girls, and listen," Miss Dacre said, gravely, and began reading from the paper in her hands :

BARLEY LOAVES.

Only five barley loaves !

Only two fishes small !

And shall I offer these poor gifts

To Christ, the Lord of all ?

To Him whose mighty word

Can still the angry sea,

Can cleanse the leper, raise the dead ?

He hath no need of me.

Yes, he *hath* need of thee ;

Then bring thy loaves of bread ;

Behold, with them, when Jesus speaks,

The multitude are fed.

"Two hundred pennyworth,"

Saith one, "had not sufficed."

Ah, true! what is abundance worth

Unless 'tis blessed by Christ?

Only one talent small,
Scarce worthy to be named ;
Truly he hath no need of this ;
O soul, art thus ashamed ?
He gave that talent first ;
Then use it in his strength ;
Thereby—thou know'st not—he may work
A miracle at length.

Many the starving souls
Now waiting to be fed,
Needing, though knowing not their need,
Of Christ, the living Bread.
Oh, hast thou known his love ?
To others make it known ;
Receiving blessings, others bless ;
No seed abides alone.

And when thine eyes shall see
The holy ransomed throng,
In heavenly fields, by living streams,
By Jesus led along,
Unspeakable thy joy shall be,
And glorious thy reward,
If, by thy *barley loaves*, one soul
Has been brought home to God.

Miss Dacre ceased, and for a moment there was silence in the class. Cassie Macauley's poem had set her companions thinking, and their teacher, believing that the Holy Spirit often chooses to bless just such silent moments

rather than many words of application, said nothing, but left her class to his influence.

Presently the superintendent came round with a bundle of papers, and handed one to each of Miss Dacre's girls. As soon as he passed on the lively Marion spoke :

"Miss Dacre, is not Cassie's poetry as good as some that they publish? If I were in her place, I would send it, and see if they would not print it. How grand it would be to see the poet's corner occupied by a member of our class!" and here Marion gave her friend a glance which called the blushes to her cheeks.

"I doubt if 'grand' is just the proper word to apply, Marion," Miss Dacre replied; "but your suggestion is a good one. If Cassie will send, or allow me to send, her verses to the editor of this little paper, and he should see fit to print them, there is no telling how much good they might accomplish. My dear," and she turned toward Cassie, "why not follow your own counsel and offer your barley loaves to the Saviour? for,

'Thereby—thou know'st not—he may work
A miracle at length,' "

she added, with a smile.

All the answer that came was a sudden bright, joyful gleam that flashed from Cassie's eyes into her own. It was answer enough for Miss Dacre, who had long ago penetrated the young girl's reserve, and knew that in her heart no wish was so fervent, so constant, so dear, as that she might find some way of serving the Master she loved.

Every one in the class had seen the look that passed between Miss Dacre and Cassie. The revelation it gave of a motive very different from that suggested by Marion impressed them more than even her verses had done; and when, at the superintendent's signal, the whole school rose to sing:

"There is work to do for Jesus,"

their faces and voices betrayed an unusual tenderness of expression.

The sunshine had changed its position on the floor; the restless little boys had again and again changed theirs; and now that the hour was over, the door of the cheerful Sunday-school room closed upon both sunshine and children until another Sabbath day should bring them back again.

CHAPTER II.

TWENTY CENTS' WORTH.

IT was just about dusk. Crowds of people jostled each other in the crooked streets of Boston as they hurried home from the day's work. It was the hour when every one seemed most absorbed in his own business and little disposed to tolerate any hindrance to his speed. The only two who did not appear to share the general haste were a boy and girl sauntering along as if the whole day and the whole street were at their service, carrying between them a large basket of clean clothes. Perfectly unconscious they seemed of the frowns and exclamations of the rapid walkers who had to turn aside to avoid the basket. Only when a rude newsboy came against it with sudden force, upsetting some newly-ironed clothes upon the pavement, did they appear to bestow a thought on their burden. The newsboy looked back and laughed, whereupon the little fellow he had insulted let

go his handle of the basket and doubled up his fists at the offender.

“Oh, don’t, now, Jokey,” pleaded the girl, who was anxiously picking up the scattered articles; “what would Aunt Kezia say if she saw you act like that? Come, now, lift up your side, like a good boy; it’s only a few steps farther.”

The boy, pacified by his sister’s words, ceased his expressions of resentment toward the big newsboy, now far in the distance, and again took his share of the burden.

They presently turned a corner and stopped before a handsome house, at the lower door of which they set down the basket and knocked. A woman admitted the children, and asked them to sit down in the kitchen while she took the clothes to Mrs. Edwards. They were glad of the rest, for they had walked quite a long way. The servant soon returned with money to take to their aunt for the washing, a message for them to remember about Mr. Edwards’s shirts, and a bundle containing an outgrown dress of Miss Lucy’s, the woman said, for Mrs. Sparr to make what use of she chose.

The little girl smiled as she received the bundle, for Mrs. Sparr was the aunt who took

care of her and her brother Jokey; and what use would Mrs. Sparr be likely to make of such a gift but to bestow it on her little niece, Susie Deane?

The walk home was a short one to the children. There was no basket to carry, and the bundle had no weight at all, because it was a present. At the door stood Aunt Kezia, waiting for them:

"There you come at last, eh? Why, I thought you must have missed your way, and that you and the clothes were all lost. What kept you so long, Jokey?"

It was a blundering sort of explanation that the boy made as he followed Aunt Kezia into the kitchen, where the smell of soap-suds and the empty boiler standing by the stove plainly told the kind of labour by which Mrs. Sparr earned her living.

"A newsboy knocked you down, did he, and then tried to fight you?"

"No, no, auntie," said Susie; "that wasn't the way at all. I'll tell you all about it just now, but do please open this bundle. It's a dress that Mrs. Edwards's little girl has outgrown, and she sent it for you to make use of as you please. I know you will fix it for me,

Aunt Kezia, won't you? Then," continued the child, almost breathless with excitement, "I won't have to stay home from Sunday-school any more."

In her overflowing delight she threw her arms around Jokey, and almost strangled him with the violence of her embrace.

"Yes, there's a tuck to be let down, and there are pretty good seams under the arms," mused Mrs. Sparr. "Not a break in it. Yes, Sue, I will do my best to fix it up for you between this and Sunday. I am willing to put myself out a bit for the sake of having you go, for I always notice you take more pains about your work, and ain't so likely to answer back when I speak sharp, after you've been to Sunday-school. They didn't have any such things when I was young," Mrs. Sparr went on, speaking now more to herself than to Susie, "or maybe I might have been a better woman."

"No Sunday-schools, auntie!" exclaimed Susie, horrified.

"No; leastways they had none where I was brought up. I used to go to church now and then with my mother, but the sermons were long and I never could understand half the preacher said; so it never did me much good."

"Never mind," said Susie, gently ; "if you'll fix my dress so I can go, I'll remember all the teacher says, to tell you when I come home, and I'll sing you all the pretty hymns I learn. Oh, I am so glad, so glad!"

"You will look as nice as anybody in this pretty blue dress," said the aunt, more intent on the possible "lettings out" and "lengthenings" of the garment in her hand than on Susie's promises. "There! take the paper and put it in the basket with the kindlings."

Susie took up the paper and glanced at it.

"Do, please, Aunt Kezia, find something else to light the fire with, and let me have this to keep. There's a picture in it, and a piece of poetry too. Let me keep this and read it to you to-night when you sit down to your sewing. You will begin the dress to-night, won't you?"

"Yes, child, if you'll be real smart, and wash up the dishes after supper, and fold those few clothes in the basket."

"Indeed I will," answered happy little Susie. "Maybe Jokey will help, so that we can all sit down together a little while."

"It isn't my new dress," grunted Jokey, whose real name as put in the family record

was Joseph, though for some reason or other he had never been called by any other than his present peculiar title.

Susie was not dismayed by the grunt; she knew it did not mean anything, and truly it did not; for when the table was cleared, Jokey stood waiting with a dry towel, and proceeded to wipe as fast as his sister could wash.

"Eight o'clock and all the work done!" exclaimed the little girl, joyfully, at last. "Now let us go in the other room and read our paper."

"It's only poetry," said Jokey. "Who cares for poetry? I am going to bed."

"Well, good-night, then, and thank you for helping me through the work."

"I believe Jokey feels bad to think the bundle wasn't for him," said Susie, laughing, as she entered the little apartment which served the widow Sparr as bedroom and parlour in one.

"Nonsense!" was the answer; "it's just that Jokey is not as pleasant as he used to be. He plays too much with the rough boys on the streets, and learns their ways. His clothes are good enough to go to Sunday-school in, if he only thought so. I wish he cared as much about it as you do."

The new dress was already in process of transformation to fit its present owner, and Mrs. Sparr's needle and thread did rapid work.

"Well, now for the reading, child. Somehow, I can sew better if somebody reads to me."

Susie smoothed out her paper, and by dint of an occasional pause to spell the hard words read some verses entitled "Barley Loaves."

"It's real good, isn't it?" said Sue.

"Yes, I suppose so," was Mrs. Sparr's rather unappreciative reply. Like Jokey, she had not much taste for poetry.

Little Susie, however, took the thought of Cassie Macauley's poem with her when she went to bed. She kept it with her in a vague sort of wondering as to how she could put it in practice every day until Sunday. Then, in her precious new dress, she went to Sunday-school, taking the paper as well as the thought with her, intending to seek explanation and advice from her beloved teacher.

Jokey refused to go; his old jacket was not fit to be seen beside her handsome dress, he said; and then what was the use? Girls could be good easy enough, but for boys it was a different matter.

The week following, the two children took

the basket of clothes to Mrs. Edwards, as usual. They started earlier than before, and so had time on the way back to stop at the Common and look at the pretty children playing there. To poor little Sue, who never had learned to play, never had owned a toy more valuable than her aunt's broken clothes-pins, which she sometimes dressed up as dolls, the sight of these boys and girls at their games was real delight.

Jokey enjoyed it too, but in less degree than his sister. He had his own out-of-door sports, his own companions. He had won a whole bag of marbles, starting on borrowed capital. He made kites in their season, and the pennies he received now and then kept him in tops.

Certainly, among children of the class to which Jokey and his sister belonged, boys have the best of it. Freedom, companions, out-door games, belong to the poorest boy, while the little girls must early learn to be satisfied with helping in the house-work and the care of younger children; and the frolicsomeness of childhood dies out of their natures almost with the cessation of babyhood.

But Susie was happy because she never dreamed of anything pleasanter than working

with Aunt Kezia in the kitchen, mending her own and Jokey's clothes, and going to the houses of the families for whom her aunt did the washing. The crowning happiness of each week was the hour spent in Sunday-school. Every Saturday was bright for her, although there was more work to be done than on any other day, because she had Sunday afternoon to anticipate; each Monday found her in a tranquil mood, for then she had so many pleasant things to remember, a new tune learned, a picture-card earned, a kind word from her teacher, new light upon the chapter that had formed the lesson. Ah! among all the pretty children at play that afternoon on the Common, there was not one with a lighter heart than little Susie Deane. She and Jokey sat some time on one of the seats, shaded by the grand old trees and commanding a good view of the fountain.

"Come," said Susie, at last; "let's go home. There's supper to get, and Aunt Kezia'll be so tired to-night."

"Wait a minute, till I get this stone out of my shoe. I guess it's a stone, it hurts so."

As the shoe alluded to had a gap at each side, it was no wonder that the stone got in.

While Jokey was thus busy, and Susie stood taking a farewell look at the cheerful scene, a thought flashed suddenly into her mind; it glowed through her eyes and parted her lips—yes, transfigured the whole of her small face. Never in all her life had such a wonderful thought found its way to Susie Deane's heart.

"Ready now, sis," said Jokey. "Why, what is it? What are you staring at so?"

"I've found my barley loaf," she replied.

"Your what?"

"Oh, Jokey, you don't know, do you? You went off to bed the night I read the poetry. I have been thinking about it ever since, and Sunday I showed it to my teacher and asked her about it; but I have not had a chance to tell you, and there was not really anything to tell until now."

"How is a fellow to know what you mean? What was the poetry about? and what has that to do, anyhow, with your standing there laughing and looking up in the trees?"

"I was not looking at the trees; it was that sign over there;" and Susie nodded her head in the direction she wished her brother to look.

"What sign? I don't see any but what's always been there. What does it say?"

"It's the 'American Sunday-School Union.' Come on, Jokey, and I will tell you as we go."

Then Susie poured into her brother's astonished ear the story of the little poem and the thoughts it had awakened in her heart, her desire to find some work to do for Jesus, and the idea he had just now revealed to her.

"Jesus spoke to me; I am sure he did, for it came to me all at once, and I never should have thought of it myself—never."

It was true that Jokey was rough, that he generally laughed at her "girl's nonsense," as he termed the new ideas that were dawning in her soul and expressing themselves in her daily life as the result of what she learned at Sunday-school; but Susie must tell somebody; she could not keep such an important plan to herself. Aunt Kezia was always too busy to listen, and so there was nobody but Jokey.

"When we first sat down in the Common," she explained, "I noticed a bit of paper lying on the ground; it looked like a leaf out of a book. Pretty soon a school-boy came along, and he picked it up and read a little, but he threw it down again, and went on whistling. By and by two little girls ran along the path, and one said, 'Oh, Josie, see that paper; let's

see if there is a story on it ;' so both of them stopped to look ; but I guess there was no story there, for they left it where it was. At last a woman took it and carried it off. She had a little parcel with only a ragged paper about it, and she folded it up neatly in this leaf and went away."

"What a long story about nothing!" was Jokey's contemptuous remark. "I saw the boy and the two little girls looking at the paper. I didn't see the woman, for I suppose that was when I was working away at my shoe ; but what about it?"

"Why, just while I was waiting for you, I looked over and saw that big book-store, and I thought of the books they sell there ; some of them I have seen at Sunday-school, and once a man came to our house and gave one—a real pretty one—to Aunt Kezia. Now, Jokey," and the little girl lowered her voice and drew very close to her brother, for this was the confidential part, "I have got a good deal of money saved up ; I guess it must be pretty near as much as twenty cents, and—"

"How did you ever come by twenty cents, Sue?" interrupted Jokey, who now began to be interested. "I haven't got a single penny,

and it ain't fair. I had to borrow two cents of Sam Brown this very day to pay my share in a supper we boys had, and here you are with more than you know how to use."

"Oh, but I do know how to use it," pleaded Susie; "and indeed, Jokey, I am sure that Aunt Kezia gives you a penny every time that she does me. What have you done with all yours?"

"It's a good while since I had any; and for the matter of that, we boys have a good many expenses one way and another."

Susie came near making a retort, but she held her peace for fear of irritating Jokey still further. Her face flushed with a sense of injustice. Jokey's money went for toys and treats to his playmates, as she knew very well; while she rarely bought herself even a stick of candy.

There was a slight feeling of vexation in each young heart, and the two walked silently home together. Susie's plan remained a secret in her own breast, with none to understand or commend it but Him "unto whom all hearts are open and all desires known."

One day a little figure wearing a faded shawl much too large for her, and a gingham sunbonnet, stood within the book-store of the Sunday

School Union, and counted over a pile of pennies, while the clerk was tying up a parcel of tracts and leaflets printed on pink and yellow and green papers.

"Twenty cents," said the child. "I think that is all right;" and she pointed to the money on the counter.

The clerk smiled at the earnest face in the sunbonnet.

"What can a little girl like you want with all these tracts?" he inquired.

The only answer he got was a shake of the head as the child darted out of the door with her treasure. He followed her with his eyes until she had entered the Common and was lost to sight among the trees and people.

As Susie walked on she asked the Saviour to please take her barley loaves and feed some hungry soul with them. Then she untied her package; and choosing one leaflet of each colour, she threw them right and left as far as she could, then turned and went home. The wind, as if to carry out the child's intention, caught up one and then another of the bright papers, and scattered them widely.

The day wore on, twilight came, then evening, and the gas-lights shone upon the Common.

The groups of merry children had long since dispersed and gone home to supper and to bed, and only now and then did any one pass along the paths. One of Susie's leaflets had been trampled in the dust and torn; another had been used to light a cigar. Had the child seen the fate of these, how it would have grieved her! But the Lord saw it, and allowed it; to him she had entrusted her offering, and in his hand it could not come to naught.

Late that evening a sailor came swaggering through the Common. He had come on shore from his vessel that very afternoon after a long sea-voyage, and had not yet adopted a landsman's custom of going to bed at regular hours. For want of a ship's deck to pace, he was keeping his watch on the Common.

A bold, bad man was Tom O'Keefe; he knew how to gamble, to drink rum, to fight—ah! what wicked thing was there he could not do?—but how to say a prayer or repeat a single text from the Bible he did not know. His face was sullen and dark; the bushy eyebrows nearly met over his nose; a great scar marked one cheek, and his large front teeth jutted out in a way that added greatly to the hideousness of his countenance. If Susie her-

self had met Tom O'Keefe in the Common, she would have run away terrified; yet Susie's hand had prepared a blessing for him.

A bit of paper fluttering across his path attracted Tom's notice. For want of anything else to engage his attention, he stooped and picked it up, then walked to the nearest gas-light to see what it might be. The title of the leaflet was "Important Questions," and of these questions the first one was "Will the road in which I am now walking lead to heaven or to hell?"

"Humph!" exclaimed Tom O'Keefe, in a harsh whisper that must have frightened the sleeping birds in their nest, if indeed there were any birds in the old tree near which he stood; "it's that kind of nonsense, is it?"

He twisted the poor leaflet and threw it on the ground angrily, then resumed his leisurely march up and down the path. But somehow, though he had thrown away the printed words, Tom O'Keefe could not drive the remembrance of them from his mind, do what he would. Conscience took up the question he had read, and repeated it over and over again within him, till the strong man started and glanced around fearfully, as if a living voice from

without had uttered them. No one but himself was in that part of the Common.

By way of getting rid of the troublesome question, the sailor turned away from that path, and resumed his walk in quite another direction. That did not do a bit of good. The voice of God had spoken within him, and he could no more get away from it than could Adam and Eve hide themselves when that voice spoke to them in the garden of Eden. Tom could not bear this; had the unwelcome thought been a man, a something outside of himself, he would have knocked it down with one blow of his clenched fist; but as it was, he could not fight it. He tried swearing, and one terrible oath broke the stillness of the great park. That had no effect on the question within. Finally he resolved to go back and find the bit of paper he had crushed and thrown aside. He did so; he carefully smoothed it out, took it again to the light, and read slowly, not only the first question, but the entire tract, even to the final words, "Oh, my soul, weigh these questions well. Let my conscience dictate the answers."

The still small voice once spoke to the prophet Elijah; a vision from heaven struck

Saul of Tarsus to the ground, from which he rose Paul the apostle. The same voice spoke now to Tom O'Keefe; a vision, not like St. Paul's, but perhaps as near to it as the groveling nature of this poor sailor could endure, came to him. He knelt upon the ground, there in the Common, where but a few moments previous he had uttered an oath, and groaned—as I have said, he knew not how to pray—unto the Lord. The darkness of night was around this poor sinner, but a light brighter than the sun was dawning upon his soul. In utter solitude he knelt there, but who knows what unseen companions surrounded him, waiting to bear the first prayer of many years up to the throne of God?

Tom O'Keefe went his way. A few weeks after, he was again on shipboard, looking as rough and uncouth as ever, but it was only in looks. Gradually, and with a difficulty of which they know nothing who have never sunk to the level of his temptations, he broke loose from his former habits, and learned something of the purity and gentleness of the children of God.

By whose hand it was that God had sent the message of salvation the sailor never knew,

and Susie Deane little dreamed, when she entered the Common a few days afterward, of the manner in which that hungry soul had been fed with a fragment of her barley loaf.

Whenever Aunt Kezia could spare her for an hour, it became henceforth Susie's practice to take three or four tracts from her bundle and hasten with them to the Common, asking Jesus to bestow a special blessing on each leaflet in her hand.

How happy Susie was now! All Aunt Kezia's scolding, all Jokey's roughness, could not destroy the peace that was in her heart. Even the faded look of her fine blue dress did not affect her much. When the other children at Sunday-school began to appear in pretty fall suits, she contented herself with donning an old flannel sack that Aunt Kezia washed and mended for her. It kept her warm, though it did not look very handsome over the poor thin summer dress. Now the blessed lessons which she learned from Sunday to Sunday were taking root in her heart, and so anxiously was Susie striving to obtain for her soul the robe of her Saviour's righteousness that she thought far less than before of her outward appearance. The promise, "Give, and it shall

be given unto you," was having its fulfilment in little Susie's life.

Often she longed to know what became of her tracts, and wondered if indeed they were doing any good, or whether her time and money had been wasted. She was starting off to the Common one afternoon with her precious little parcel in her hand, when Aunt Kezia's voice summoned her back.

"Sue," said the tired woman, "there's an errand you'll have to do, 'way the other side of town. I'm sorry to call you back; you get little enough pleasuring; but as you were going for a walk, maybe it won't make so much difference to you which way it lies. I meant to send Jokey, but the fact is it's more bother to hunt that boy up than all the good you get when you find him."

Mrs. Sparr told Susie the errand to be done, and off started the little girl, more disappointed than Aunt Kezia could guess, in that it made all possible difference to her in which direction she walked. She had looked forward through all the morning's work to that spare hour in the afternoon when she should run to her favourite spot and there drop those pink and yellow papers that were by God's blessing to

spring up and bear fruit in many a human heart. But Susie drove back the tears like a brave little woman and hurried along to perform her errand. The sweet air and the sunshine soothed her, and the thought of another day close at hand, during some part of which, perhaps, her aunt might spare her long enough to run to the Common and back, comforted her for this disappointment.

As she entered the house on her return her surprise and pain were great at the sound of violent weeping which proceeded from the kitchen. She hastened in. Oh, what could it be? Was Jokey hurt in some unknown way? Had the landlord been for his rent? Was her aunt taken suddenly ill? All these questions asked themselves at once in Susie's mind, and there was no one to answer. The kettle was singing on the stove, ready to make the tea; a shirt only half ironed lay on the table, waiting for Mrs. Sparr's skilful fingers to complete the work, while Mrs. Sparr herself, regardless of tea-time or the half-finished shirt, sat rocking back and forth in the creaky little rocking-chair, her face hidden in her calico apron and her sobs coming thick and fast. Susie stood mutely before her aunt, waiting to be told what

great calamity was the cause of such an outbreak.

When Aunt Kezia became conscious of her niece's presence, she wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron, and pointed to a pink paper that lay on one corner of the ironing-board.

"Is that yours?" asked the sobbing woman.

"Yes, auntie," said Susie, in a confused sort of way.

She had never told her aunt about the investment of her money at the book-store, and was not glad to find her secret made known. She must have dropped it, she thought, while Aunt Kezia was talking to her at the door. But what had that to do with all this distress?

"Take it, child, take it," said the poor woman, brokenly, between her sobs, "and sit down and read it to me—every word."

"Dear auntie, sha'n't I make the tea first and put the things on the table? Jokey will be in before I get half through reading."

"Jokey has been in and taken a bite, and we shall not see him again till bed-time. Don't vex me, Sue, but read this, every word, straight through."

The little girl, without any further objection, took up the tract, and read its title: "How to Begin to be a Christian." Even at this Mrs. Sparr's sobs broke out afresh.

"Go on, go on, Sue," she said, "and don't you stop for me crying, nor for anything else, until you have read me every word that is there."

Susie obeyed, and kept steadily on in spite of the frequent sighs and exclamations of her hearer. It was slow work, both on account of these hindrances and the difficulty of pronouncing some of the longer words. She finished at last, and put the tract again on the ironing-table.

"Shall I cut the bread now, auntie, and make the tea?" inquired the little girl.

"No; who cares about tea?" was the surprising answer to this inquiry. "You kneel right down there and pray for me—pray hard, Sue. You've been to Sunday-school, and you know how; you pray, and I will say 'Amen.'"

Susie got on her knees and Aunt Kezia knelt beside her; and though the little girl was sorely puzzled to know what she ought to ask for a grown-up person, afraid too that Aunt Kezia would interrupt her if she did not

say just the right thing, she prayed with her whole heart, and entreated God to give her aunt all that she wanted, and to make her a real true Christian. As the prayer went on the sobs were fainter and fainter; and when Susie said "Amen" and rose, Mrs. Sparr rose too, and without saying a word put her arm around her niece and kissed her tenderly, then quietly took an iron from the stove and finished her shirt.

When the dishes were washed and the little family gathered in the front room, Jokey having come in earlier than usual, Mrs. Sparr sent Susie up stairs for her Bible, and told her to read aloud one of the Psalms. This done, again she bade the child pray. It was hard work this time, for Jokey was there—Jokey, who laughed at all such things; but in her great rejoicing at this wonderful change in Aunt Kezia she thought nothing too hard for her, not even Jokey's laughter.

When they rose from their knees, Aunt Kezia laid her hand on a shoulder of each.

"Children," she said, "I am going to begin to be a Christian, by God's help. I haven't done for you as I ought to have done; I haven't done anything as I ought to have

done ; I am a great sinner ; but the Lord Jesus died for me." The sobs began afresh. "I wanted to tell you, so you might try and help me along a bit, children, and make allowance for me too, for it will be hard work, this turning square round after fifty years' walking just the other way."

Jokey's round eyes showed how astonished he was. There was nothing for him to say, and he got out of the room as quickly as he could. Susie, however, felt a new affection spring up in her heart toward Aunt Kezia, as if a new bond had arisen between them ; and now that she understood from her own lips that her auntie was beginning the Christian life, her heart overflowed with sympathy. The sweetest thought perhaps of all to the little girl as she laid her head on her pillow that night was that now she knew her offering accepted, that it was really her "barley loaf" which the Lord had taken and used in bringing her aunt to a knowledge of the truth.

After this things were easier for Susie. Aunt Kezia, when she knew the object of her niece's walks, took care to plan the labour of each day so that she should have leisure for her good work. Of course the secret had come

out, now that the tract dropped on the floor had brought about such a blessed result, and henceforth the little girl was certain of her aunt's hearty sympathy.

"Be sure, child," she often called out as Susie was starting forth to her loving service—"be sure you take along that one about 'beginning to be a Christian.'" We are apt to prize above all others the medicine that cures our own disease.

One day the bright leaflets had just left the young distributor's hand, when a girl about the same age as herself sprang forward and caught one. She looked in Susie's face as she did so, and seeing a pleased smile there, came a step or two nearer and said:

"I'm going to take it to my sister; she is sick. I guess she will die, and maybe the little book will please her."

"Can your sister read?"

"Oh yes; she is grown up; she knows everything, for she went to school once."

The girl skipped away as soon as she had given this information, and Susie followed her with a little prayer that the sick sister might profit by the tract.

"How it was Blotted Out" was the title of

the one the child had picked up. The words reached that dying girl as the last call to repentance for the years of sin which came between her soul and its Saviour. Whether that call was given in vain, or whether in those last hours of life she was able to ask and receive the blotting out of her transgressions, no one knew. The "accepted times" and the "too late" of other souls are not within our knowledge.

A dreary November afternoon; dead leaves that had lost their rustle lying in sad heaps all along the gutters; a heavy dampness in the air that was more than mist and less than rain,—all these made the streets of Boston unusually cheerless and unattractive. Very few people were out, for the poor who had no protection against the weather kept in-doors, as many as could, and the rich who wore furs and rode in carriages preferred the comfort of their luxurious homes to the out-door disagreeableness.

"Better not go to-day," was Mrs. Sparr's counsel to Sue. "There won't be many folks to pick up your tracts such a day as this; the pretty things would lie on the ground and get soaked through and through, and not do a

mite of good. Your throat was so bad last night, my dear, and you look quite feverish now."

"Please, auntie," pleaded the husky little voice. "It's all that I can do for Jesus, you know."

"Yes, Sue, I know; but Jesus'll find ways where you never thought of 'em. He made you drop that word of salvation right before my very eyes that day when you went off grieving because you couldn't put it in the way of some stranger."

"What!" said Jokey, who had come in just in time to catch his aunt's words and see the disappointed look on Susie's face. "Is it about taking those tracts to the Common? Don't let her go, Aunt Kezia; it ain't fit weather for a girl to be out, especially one that's halfway sick. I never saw such a little goose."

"Hand over your papers," said the boy, speaking to his sister, but with his back turned toward her. "There ain't much fun going on in the street; I'd about as lief throw about tracts as to loaf round doing nothing."

"Oh, Jokey, if you only would!" came joyfully from Susie's lips. "Do you mean it, really?"

"I said so, didn't I? and when I say a thing, I always mean it."

Susie flew up stairs to get her treasures, thinking what a good brother Jokey was, and what injustice she often did him by supposing he cared for nothing but his own comfort.

"There, Jokey! there are six; real good ones they are;" and Susie, breathless with running up and down stairs, and with excitement as well, thrust them into his hand. "Be sure and drop them where somebody is likely to see them; and," she added, in a bashful whisper, "I always say a little prayer before I scatter them about."

"Whew!" was Jokey's response. "I didn't promise that. You stay here and do the praying, sis; it's enough for me to take the tracts."

On his way Jokey met two of his playmates, who asked where he was going in such a hurry. The explanation amused them greatly, and they began addressing him as "Parson Deane." Jokey laughed too; the ridicule did not hurt him at all, because his sister was the real object of it, not he.

"Better come along," urged one boy; "we're going to Steve Smith's house to make kites. Throw your books here in the gutter—it's just

as good a place as the Common, for all the good they'll do—and come on."

"No," said Jokey, manfully; "I promised Sue, and I'm going to stick to my word this once. Here, you fellows, take one home, each of you; maybe your women-folks will read 'em;" and he offered each of his friends a tract.

One laughed harshly as he refused it: "None of our folks has eddication enough for that sort o' thing, nor religion, nuther, I guess." The other boy accepted the paper, and promised to give it to his "granddad."

Jokey grumbled in an undertone to himself as he entered the Common and saw it almost deserted:

"What a goosie Sue is! I wonder what ever put the notion in her head? I wish I hadn't promised her to take this trudge all for nothing. But then she looked real sick. If it has to be done, I'm the fellow to do it. Here goes!"

So saying, he gave the tracts a great fling and turned to go home.

"Boy, boy! stop a minute!" called out a voice behind him.

Doubting whether or not he was the boy addressed, Jokey paused in his rapid walk,

and turned around. An elderly lady was making her way rapidly toward him. Jokey was rather alarmed. He was not accustomed to being spoken to by ladies, and had a vague fear that he was now to be called to account for some of his many misdeeds. It might be this lady's favourite cat that he had tied up in a tree yesterday, or her window that he had smashed the day before. The old lady's smile as she drew near convinced him that his momentary fear was unfounded. She touched his shoulder with her gloved hand :

"What is your name, my good lad?"

Jokey winced at the word "good," conscious that he was far enough from deserving it, but answered respectfully :

"Jokey Deane, ma'am."

"It was you that I saw throwing those tracts on the ground just now, was it not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And what was your motive in doing that, my boy?"

"My what?" said Jokey, who was always confused by what he termed "high dic."

"Your motive; what did you do it for?"

"So folks can pick 'em up and read 'em," said Jokey, thinking that the old lady must be

very stupid if she didn't know that without asking.

"Do you often come here with your tracts, my little missionary?" pursued the benevolent lady.

"Never did before, ma'am, and never mean to again."

"Tut, tut! are you tired out with one good effort?"

Jokey was getting tired alike of being questioned and of appearing in a false character, so he hastened to inform his new friend that he had a sister at home who was just foolish enough to waste her time and money in throwing about tracts; "she even prays about them too," he added, expecting to impress his hearer with the extent of Susie's folly.

"The dear child!" said the old lady.

"She is sick to-day, and that's all the reason that I came. Catch me promising her to do it again, though."

"I should like to see your little sister. Do you live far from here?"

"No, ma'am; it's just round that corner there, and up the next street a little ways, and down a lane, fourth house, left-hand side," at the close of which piece of information Jokey

started off at a brisk pace, whistling as he went.

"Boy! Jonah!" called the lady. Again he stopped. "Suppose you show me the way to your house; I want to get acquainted with that dear child you have told me about."

There was no help for it, so Jokey ungraciously led the way to his aunt's house, opened the door into the kitchen, pointed to where Susie sat patching his old jacket, and said, "That's the owner of the tracts," and ran off, leaving the good lady to introduce herself.

The afternoon which had brought Susie Deane a real disappointment brought her also a blessing—a blessing so rich and full and lasting that the disappointment was never again remembered. The new friend that God had sent her sat down between her big work-box and Aunt Kezia's ironing-table, and drew from the child by many questions the history of her tract distribution. Mrs. Sparr paused in her work occasionally to help along the story which Susie was too modest to tell very fully, and to relate to her interested listener the history of her own conversion.

"And have you a good supply of tracts left for future use, my dear?" the new friend asked.

“Only three more, ma’am.”

Indeed, the thought that there were just three more, and that when these were used her work for Jesus must come to an end, had made the little girl very sad-hearted as she sat at her work after Jokey left her.

But when did God ever allow his servants' work for him to cease for want of means to carry it on? The lady gave her a dollar to buy a new stock. Not only so. An interest was awakened in her warm heart in behalf of the washerwoman and her adopted children. Often she came to see them, always bringing with her liberal helps, sometimes of money, oftener of sympathy and counsel. Through her Susie was provided with a constant supply of barley loaves to offer to the Lord, and his blessing went daily forth with her.

Susie is a middle-aged woman now, and has children as old as she and Jokey were at the time of this story, but she keeps up the custom of her little girlhood; and if you ever chance to pass through Boston Common late in the day and should meet a kind-faced woman dropping tracts along the paths, seek an introduction to her, for you may be sure it is none other than Susie Deane.

CHAPTER III.

SAILOR IKE'S WINDOW.

MOTHER! oh, mother, mother!"

Frank Merryvale stood at the bottom of the stairs and shouted with all his might. The house had enjoyed the delightful quietness which comes as a special boon to city houses in the less frequented streets on Sunday afternoons. That quietness was sadly interrupted now by the good lungs of the boy of the family.

"Amy, where's mother? Say quick!" said Master Frank, in a somewhat less noisy tone, to a little girl who came skipping down the stairs.

"In her room," replied Amy; "she has a headache, and is lying on the sofa. She was asleep until you banged the front door so, you naughty boy!"

"I didn't bang; I shut it ever so softly. Has a headache, has she? Poor mother! I'll go bathe it for her."

Frank sprang up the stairs three at a time

with an effort at quietness so very unsuccessful that Amy laughed as she watched him from the hall below. He knocked at the door, but bounced in without waiting for an answer.

“Got a headache, mother? I’m ever so sorry; I’m going to bathe it for you; and oh, mother, I’ve got something to tell you. We fellows— Oh, where’s the camphor bottle? Does it hurt so bad?”

Mrs. Merryvale pressed her hand to her head and changed her position on the sofa. Frank made two or three journeys round the room in search of the bottle, that was down stairs in a closet, before the poor woman could get a chance to speak.

“Never mind it, Frank. Just sit down; take off your boots, dear, and then try to lower your voice; that will do me more good than the camphor. There, now!” as she saw the creaking boots removed and put aside; “what is it that you want to tell me?”

Frank took a seat beside the sofa and began passing his hand very gently over the aching head. He did love his mother very dearly, this blustering boy, and would do anything in the wide world to promote her comfort, except—be quiet.

"I want you to find out something for me to do—something real good, you know, and benevolent. I promised Mr. Hudson I would try. I couldn't think of a single thing, but I knew you would tell me. Come, that's a dear little mother."

At this very vague demand, Mrs. Merryvale looked perplexed.

"I don't know what you mean, Frank," she replied. "Begin at the beginning, and tell me the whole story. You said you had something to tell me, and you begin by asking me for information."

"Well, you see—that is, I'm going to tell you," said Frank, making a great effort at a connected story. "There was a piece of poetry in our Sunday-school paper to-day about 'Barley Loaves.' Mr. Hudson read it aloud after the lesson, and told us he wanted all of us to think about it, and see if each boy and girl belonging to the school couldn't find something to give or something to do for people around us. He said whatever kind act we performed for others for Jesus's sake he would bless, just as he did the loaves of bread. That is just what Mr. Hudson said, mother; I've told you as exactly as I can remember."

"I understand, Frank," said Mrs. Merryvale. "You have given the account very clearly; and now what is it that I am to tell you?"

"Why, something for me to do. I can't think of a thing. Some of us boys were talking about it on the way home. There's Jim Macy; he chops all the wood for his mother, and gets a quarter a week for doing it, so it's easy enough for him to give something; and there's Willie Orrin, that has always a pocketful of money—no trouble about his finding barley loaves; but as for me—"

"Ah, my boy!" said Mrs. Merryvale; "I understood you to say just now that you wanted something to *do*. If Willie Orrin has so much spending-money that it costs him no sacrifice to give some away, he cannot enter into the spirit of Mr. Hudson's instruction at all. I suppose your father would give you money to give in charity if you asked him, but I ~~would~~ would not do so if I were you. Let your offering to the Lord be your very own, Frank. Barley loaves, if I understand the matter, are made of personal effort and self-denial."

Frank looked grave.

"Now, dear, I can't bear any more talking,

and you had better go by yourself and think the matter over; pray about it too, and the question will soon answer itself."

Frank left his mother's room, as he was bidden, but going by himself to think about it was not his way of doing things. He went all over the house in search of Amy, to see if she could give him an idea. He found her at last, but she could not think of anything for him to do.

"If you were a girl, now," she said, "you could buy calico, and make dresses for poor children, but you are a boy; boys can't do anything, I guess, but bother folks."

Poor Frank left Amy, more in the dark than before. He wished he had not gone to Sunday-school that afternoon. It was not pleasant to be thinking, thinking, on one subject all the time, and not be able to come to a conclusion. It was as bad as doing a hard sum that he could not get right.

When Mr. Merryvale came home, Frank assailed him with his questions, in a vague hope that his father would hand him some money to put in the mission box, and so end the matter. Mr. Merryvale did no such thing. He said:

“By all means go ahead and find your barley loaf, and be sure, whatever you do with it, that it is given to the Lord. But let it be all your own thought and your own work ; otherwise it amounts to nothing.”

Frank went to bed that night provoked with himself and everybody else—with himself for allowing Mr. Hudson’s proposal to trouble him so when he need not take it up unless he chose ; with the rest of the family for not helping him out of his difficulties. He resolved he would think no more about Mr. Hudson’s words or those provoking verses. What did anybody write them for, and have them printed in their Sunday-school paper ? But when he woke next morning, even before his eyes were fairly open, these words began arranging themselves in his memory :

“Only one talent small,
Scarce worthy to be named ;
Truly He hath no need of this ;
O Soul, art thus ashamed ?
He gave that talent first ;
Then use it in his strength ;
Thereby—thou know’st not—he may work
A miracle at length.”

Frank knelt down by his bedside and prayed

that if there was anything a boy like him could do in his service he would please make it plain to him.

School-time came, and he was off with his books. All that day he was busy with lessons or games with his play-mates. He had no time to think of barley loaves. His father and mother did not allude to yesterday's questions; they wisely concluded to let them work their own answers in the boy's heart.

The next afternoon he came running down stairs, and according to custom paused a few steps from the bottom, and swung himself over the banister into the hall. There was a faint crash under his foot, and little Amy's heart-broken cry quickly made him aware of the mischief he had done.

"My dolly's cradle! my dolly's beautiful cradle!" wailed the child. "Oh what a naughty, cruel boy you are, to put your big foot on it!"

Frank stooped to pick up the fragments; the frail toy was indeed ruined. He kissed Amy and told her again and again how sorry he was, and that he did not mean to break it.

"But that don't mend the cradle, Frank, and I don't believe I shall ever have another

so pretty as this. See how pretty the carving is on the top! Oh dear, dear, dear!" moaned Amy.

Frank took the pieces from her hand and examined them carefully. He asked if she would let him take them up to his room.

"Do you think you can mend the cradle? I'm afraid it's too badly broken for that, Frank; but here are the pieces if you want to try."

It was very late that night when Frank went to bed; he did not come down, as usual, to study his lessons in the library, and his mother wondered what he was about, and would have gone to his room to inquire but that callers came in and put the matter entirely out of her mind.

Next morning, when Amy entered the dining-room, she found on her plate a prettily carved little cradle, almost the counterpart of the one whose destruction she had cried over the evening before.

"Oh, Frank," she exclaimed, "how nicely you have mended it! I was afraid you could not put it together at all."

"I could not, Amy; look again."

"Oh, mother, father, just look!" cried the

delighted Amy ; " Frank has made me a new cradle for my dolly. It's exactly like the other, only it's a little larger. What a dear, good boy you are !" saying which, she ran to her brother's side of the table and offered her pretty lips for a kiss.

" But yesterday you said I was a naughty, cruel boy," said Frank, well pleased at having earned Amy's forgiveness.

" I won't ever say so again," was the child's ready promise.

Mr. Merryvale took the toy from his little daughter's hand and examined it carefully :

" Where did you get your tools, Frank, and your wood ?"

" Why, father, have you forgotten the little box of tools you gave me last Christmas ? They have kept my fingers out of mischief many a time. As to the wood, I always try to have a piece of thin walnut handy ; it's very useful."

" Frank has really quite a talent for that sort of work," said Mrs. Merryvale. " I should not wonder if he turned out a carpenter."

" That would be ever so nice," added little Amy. " Frank would make all the chairs and

tables we wanted, and you would not have to buy a single thing, would you, mother?"

The elders of the party laughed at Amy's idea, and Frank smiled too, but not at his sister's words. There was a thought dawning behind the smile that ere the day ended had developed into a purpose.

A short distance from Mr. Merryvale's handsome residence there was a low, tumble-down sort of house belonging to a very tumble-down sort of old man who had once been a sailor, but house and man both looked now as if a strong "nor'wester" would blow them to pieces. "Isaac Creel" was the name painted on the shabby sign-board over the door—that is, such was the spelling when the board was first put up, so many years ago that no child in the neighbourhood could remember seeing all the letters complete. The "s" was blurred, and one "a" was wanting in "Isaac," and "Creel" was left with only the upper half of the "C," and both "e's" so indistinct that one could hardly decide what letter of the alphabet was indicated. It mattered not; every boy in that locality knew "Sailor Ike." The marbles, boats, and balls in the little shop-window were sign enough for them; and where was the baby

who did not know the flavour of Sailor Ike's taffy? The window! It would be easier to say what was not there than to enumerate what was. Ribbons and stove polish; jumping-jacks, apples, lace, and cough mixtures, dolls, drums, and doughnuts, were ranged in a proximity attractive only to that class of customers who frequented Isaac Creel's shop. Certainly there was not another store like it in the city. Such stories, too, as the old man could tell! It was worth any boy's cent to go there for taffy, and have thrown in extra such a tale of shipwreck or cannibals, snakes or tigers, as made Robinson Crusoe tame by comparison.

There was, however, another class who were attracted to Sailor Ike's shop—a class which the old man thought it not worth while to beguile with stories. These were the boys and girls who had no money for marbles, nor even taffy; children, they were, with bare feet and pinched faces, whose scantily covered bodies shivered with every wind that blew their ragged skirts and sought out the thin places in their jackets. There was hardly an hour of the day but that one or two such children might be seen staring at the doughnuts and jumping-jacks in the window. They never

went in the shop; they never might touch, much less taste and play with, the treasures on the other side of the glass. It cost nothing to look, however, and they could smell too without paying. To these children the very smell of candy and apples was a delight.

Frank Merryvale was not one of Sailor Ike's customers. He lived near the old shop, to be sure, but his purchases were made at stores of a different stamp. He knew the place well, for all that. He had to pass it daily on his way to school, and never failed to glance at the window to see if it held anything new. This noisy, roistering Frank had a very tender heart of his own. It beat great throbs of sympathy under his warm overcoat when, on bitter cold mornings, he saw the tattered garments and hungry faces of the children standing outside of Sailor Ike's window. It was a remembrance of such sights that brought the smile to his face that morning at the breakfast-table when father, mother, and sister had been praising his skill as a carpenter—the remembrance and—something else.

Old Isaac Creel was a little surprised one afternoon when the tinkle of the bell at the shop door brought him from his dingy back

sitting-room to wait on a possible customer to see before him a well-dressed boy who was gazing about on his little stock with apparent interest. Isaac's patrons did not, as a general thing, wear overcoats and gloves and well-fitting boots. The sailor bowed and smiled as stiffly as one of his own toys might have done, and asked what he should have the pleasure of showing the young gentleman. He had just got in a few very nice games, he said, and those were excellent balls there in the window; or perhaps he would like a bottle of superior hair-oil?

No; Frank wanted none of these things. He seemed to find it hard work to say just what he did want, now that he was face to face with the little shop-keeper. He had planned not only this call, but the conversation, all so nicely on his way from school, had decided what he should propose to Sailor Ike and what Sailor Ike should say in reply. Now he could not recall a word. He kept the old man standing expectant behind his counter some minutes before he could determine how to open the business which had brought him thither. When the words did come, they were disconnected stragglers that seemed unwilling to be

bound together in sentences. By dint of repeated efforts on Frank's part and close attention on that of Isaac, his desire became known.

"There are a great many poor children in this neighbourhood?" Frank suggested.

"More'n you can shake your fist at," agreed Isaac.

"They don't spend much money on such things as these?" and Frank indicated with his fingers the toys in the window.

"Not many dollars a day," said the owner of the window, with a cracked laugh at his own thoughts on the subject.

"If some one should bring you a few simple toys between now and Christmas, would you be willing to put them in your window here? I'd like to have them all in at once, and the day before Christmas will be best," said Frank, half musingly.

"Hm-m-m! That sort o' folks you spoke of ain't very likely to buy many toys for Christmas, young man; and if I put my own things out of the window to accommodate yourn, I shall look for my share of the profits, whoever buys."

A sharp, business look settled itself on the sailor's mouth and twinkled in his light blue

eyes. The respectful tone which he had assumed toward the gloves, boots, and overcoat changed to one more suitable, as he thought, for a youth who wanted to make a living by selling toys, and needed his help in doing it.

"Certainly I will see that you are paid for your trouble, sir," Frank replied, not heeding the changed voice. "I do not want to sell the toys; I—that is, the person I spoke of wishes to send them as Christmas gifts to the children who are too poor to buy. If you would take the trouble, sir, to place them where they can be seen, and whenever a poor child stands looking at them—there! like that fellow now," he exclaimed, pointing to a boy of the very class he had in mind—"if you would take notice which of the things it is he takes a fancy to and call him in—him or her, either—and give him the thing—I—that is, the person I spoke of—will be much obliged, and will pay whatever you ask for your trouble." Frank looked eagerly in Sailor Ike's face to read, if possible, the answer there.

"Hm-m-m!" mused the man of business; "I must think about that a moment."

"Certainly, sir; I will wait until you consider the subject."

It did not take long for consideration. Sailor Ike's thoughts were on this wise: "A lot of toys, without costing me anything, to make a show in the window and draw customers. It'll be some bother calling in every ragged chap that stares at 'em, but then I shall give the toys, and get all the credit of it; that's something for my trade. Besides, there is the percentage I'll charge for my trouble. Hm-m-m! won't them poor chaps be tickled when I call to 'em to come in and get a present? That's worth something too." Mr. Creel had kept time to his thoughts by regular taps of his forefinger on the counter on which he leaned.

Frank took the opportunity of examining his face. How full of lines it was, and how shrewd! He wondered that the boys of the neighbourhood liked him so well. The fact was that the old sailor's business face and his story-telling face were as different as if they belonged to two persons instead of one. The happy, free-and-easy expression that came over his countenance when he narrated hair-breadth escapes and daring adventures of life on the ocean was far more attractive than the screwed eye-lids and compressed lips which had grown to be the accompaniment of his calculation of

sixpences and shillings during the years of shop-keeping.

Frank wondered as he gazed if he had, after all, chosen the right person as the medium of his proposed benevolence. He need not have doubted, for Isaac Creel was thoroughly honest, and under the outside crust formed by a shrewd looking after his own interests he was really kind-hearted, and had a passive sort of good-will toward all the ragged urchins that stopped to gaze at his wares.

The meditation came to an end ; the bargain was made ; and Frank Merryvale went home to lock himself in his room, take out his tools, and spend every spare moment of that day, and each succeeding one of the weeks between it and Christmas, in contriving and executing the toys that were to bring gladness into the eyes that now stared hopelessly into Sailor Ike's window. Not a word did he say to any one in the house about his project ; nor did he give any satisfactory answer to the boy in his class who asked him the next Sunday if he had found any barley loaf yet. The housemaid was surprised, indeed, when one morning as she turned down the blankets to make Master Frank's bed a wooden monkey jumped at her,

nor was she very well pleased at the chips and saw-dust she had to sweep up from his carpet every day. Mrs. Merryvale, too, noticed many a sign that some unusual undertaking was filling up the boy's mind as well as his time; but if she suspected its nature, she said nothing. There was a large square of oil-cloth placed over the carpet in the corner he had chosen for his work-shop one day while he was at school, which showed plainly to Frank that somebody knew of his work, but the purpose which was the one great thing remained his own secret, he was sure.

The day before Christmas came. There was a joyous expectancy in the air—a thought of stockings to be hung up, of taper-lighted trees full of precious fruit, shining through every pair of child-eyes from one end of town to the other; except, indeed, the child-eyes for whom such Christmas joy never came, and, alas! they were many. Eyes they were full of vague longing for a happiness dreamed of, but never realized.

Such eyes, a good many pairs of them, gazed hungrily in at Sailor Ike's window that day. Never before had the little shop appeared so attractive; the customary apples, doughnuts,

blackening, and ribbons had disappeared, and the space usually occupied by them was now filled with sets of doll furniture neatly carved and painted, wooden soldiers, villages, blocks with a letter on each, and many other things. Sometimes the faces clustered so thickly in front of the brilliant show that the small window could not accommodate them.

Not only the lookers, but the buyers, visited Isaac Creel's shop that day. Marbles, tops, knives, and candy were greatly in demand among the old man's regular customers. The new toys displayed won the admiration of this class also, and many an opportunity was offered for selling them. "Those are not for sale" were words that had to be so often repeated that the master of the shop got tired of his bargain, and more than once caught himself wishing that he were not quite so honest, the temptation to make a little profit was so great.

What was the astonishment, too, of would-be purchasers to see Sailor Ike beckon to one and another ragged child outside, and hand to them perhaps the very articles they would willingly pay their money for? If these were surprised, what shall we say of those who received the gifts? Some, when they were called

to enter, hung back, fearing a scolding for standing so long in the shop-keeper's light. Few had presence of mind enough to say "Thank you" when the very toys on which their hearts were set were placed in their hand, with a smile and a hearty "Merry Christmas!" from the good man behind the counter. How many blessings were showered upon Sailor Ike's head that day that he did not deserve! How many joyous little faces turned away from the window that had come to it sad and hopeless!

Several times a boy passed by the shop, and sometimes paused a moment behind the delighted gazers to overhear their comments on the toys inside. He always went on his way with a smile on his face. Frank Merryvale was beginning to experience the truth of the saying that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."


On that day before Christmas he offered his first barley loaves to the Lord—the first, but not the last, for there was another promise fulfilled to him, namely: "Give, and it shall be given unto you." He had given the labour of a few leisure-hours to God's poor, and in return God poured his love into his heart and

pointed out the way for him to obtain an eternal inheritance.

Frank Merryvale is no longer a boy ; he does not now spend his time in carving doll furniture and the like ; but every year, as Christmas approaches, he makes some arrangement with a toy merchant of larger capital than Sailor Ike by which many poor children's hearts are gladdened ; he visits the orphan asylums, too, and other charitable institutions for the benefit of the little ones, and leaves a donation toward the turkeys and mince pies of the Christmas dinner.

CHAPTER IV.

WHOSE LOAF WAS IT?

N old man sat alone in a large room. Rich curtains fell in graceful festoons from ceiling to floor ; rare pictures hung upon the walls ; carpet thick and soft as moss covered the floor ; everything in the apartment, from the grim bronzes that adorned the mantel to the cushion under their owner's foot, said, as plainly as if each had a voice, "Money, money, money !" They said it to every guest who crossed the threshold ; they said it many times every day to the old man sitting in their midst. Oh how he enjoyed that oft-repeated word ! He often sat thus alone for hours, glancing from one painting to another, from mirror to carpet, and perhaps letting his eye rest at last on the ugly figures in bronze that seemed to add one shade more to the ever-gloomy room. "Money, money, money !" ticked the grand clock, and "Money, money, money !" echoed the sensitive

crystals that hung from the huge chandelier overhead. Then the thin face would twist itself into a smile, and from behind toothless gums a squeaky little voice would echo the sound: "Money, money, money!"

The name of this old man was Christopher Joyce, and his unceasing occupation was to wander through the great solemn house or sit, as I have said, for hours in his arm-chair, just thinking how rich he was. This Christopher was not at all like the one in the legend, the saint who bore the child Jesus across the swollen river, and so earned his name, Christophero, or Christ-bearer. Well, yes, in one way he was like him, for we read that Saint Christopher had made up his mind to be a servant to the mightiest. He found that the mightiest Master of all was Christ, while this Christopher believed that the mightiest master was Money; therefore he served it with all his soul.

The big silver plate on the street door had engraved on it the one word "Joyce," but somehow the person whom it represented was known better in the place where he lived by other titles. In the busy streets of the city where men congregated who also worshipped

the mightiest—this world's mightiest—he was spoken of as the Honourable Mr. Joyce; the meaning was that his purse was honourable. The boys along the street, however, whispered after him: "There goes old Jew Joyce!" and the poor people who had to pay their rent to him every quarter day never named him among themselves but as "the miser," "old skinflint," and the like.

But there was one dear little girl with sunny hair and eyes as deep and quiet as the sky on clear nights who called him "Grandfather." Oh what a sweet sound that was to Christopher Joyce! When his darling Miriam climbed up in his lap to get her good-night kiss, and whispered "Dear grandfather," or when she mounted on a stool behind him and curled his scanty white hairs over her fingers, "to make grandfather look pretty," the clock, the pictures, the furniture, repeated their constant burden all in vain; Miriam's loving voice reached his heart with a melody even richer than "Money, money, money!"

This little girl lived in the great house with her grandfather. She had a pretty room up stairs, with pictures in it of birds and kittens, of pretty children and bright flowers. She

had a book-case too, filled with the story-books that children love best, from "Mother Goose's Melodies" to the last new volumes that had charmed her eyes in the book-store with their handsome bindings of crimson and gold. A canary bird sang his merry song in the cage that hung in her window. Shining gold-fishes glittered and flashed in a globe that stood on the table. The sun shone in that room right merrily, for there were no thick, dark curtains to shut him out, no grim-faced bronzes to frighten him away. This gay little nook of Miriam's held all the sunshine of the house—all the music of it too, for that matter. Sometimes the canary trilled, sometimes his young mistress sang, and very often they tried duets together.

Down stairs there was a good, kind house-keeper who was never tired of making dainty cakes for her pet, or of polishing, dusting, and arranging the solemn furniture of the house to make it all appear as cheerful and attractive as possible, just for her sake. A governess too came every day to teach Miriam. She had no playmates, poor child! Yes, in this she was poor, although so rich, because grandfather did not like children, and would not suffer one

to enter his door. Miriam's bird and dolls took the place to her of human companionship, and her books were dearer to her than to happier girls who have sisters and brothers and friends.

Sundays were to the lonely child joyful days indeed. Then her governess came to take her to church in the morning. Christopher Joyce never went to church. That was a place where such words were read as "All is vanity and vexation of spirit;" and "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days;" and "The love of money is the root of all evil." These and many other very unpleasant texts were frequently read and preached upon at church. What wonder that Christopher Joyce did not like to go! But Miriam went, as I said before, and happiness is a small word to express her feelings as she sat every Sunday morning within sight of the glorious painted windows and heard the harmonies of the organ.

Could heaven have sights and sounds much better than these? If so, how she longed to die and go there! No, "happiness" was not a shadow even of what she felt; it was ecstasy. Not a pleasure that happened her but a token that God was present with her then, and a promise that he would take her to be with him hereafter. If ever the preacher noticed that earnest upturned face as his glance went over the church, he could never surely have traced in it any relationship to the shrivelled visage on whose every feature was printed "Money, money, money!"

If Sunday mornings brought such delight to Miriam, what shall be said of the afternoons? Then she went to Sunday-school; there she learned the sweet music which she sang for her canary bird the other days of the week; there she heard words far more precious to her than any that were sounded through the great stately house she called home; and Sunday nights, when it was all over for six days more, she thought about all the heavenly pleasure of the sacred house, and her little heart often seemed as if it must burst, it grew so full; just as her canary bird sometimes appeared to have its small body so over-full of

song that it must choke to death from pure gladness.

Now and then Christopher Joyce would take his grand-daughter on his knee on Sundays when she came for her good-night kiss, and would ask, just for the sake of hearing her pleasant voice, what she had been doing all day. Then she would show him her new library book, perhaps sing a hymn just learned, and repeat the day's text as she stroked his wisps of white hair. She went to bed all the happier for being allowed to do this, and the grandfather did too, for he dearly loved his little orphaned Miriam.

"Grandfather," said the child as she sat on his knee one Sunday night, "I learned such a nice piece of poetry in my paper to-day; don't you want to hear it?"

"Yes, darling; say it for me."

The deep, clear eyes looked straight into his bleared, sunken ones, and two small hands held one of his yellow, bony ones between them, while Miriam recited without a mistake the poem called "Barley Loaves."

"I think that's so pretty, grandfather—don't you?"

"Yes, my dear," said Christopher, think-

ing more of the voice than the words it uttered.

"Grandfather, did *you* ever give any barley loaves to Jesus?"

"I? Why, no, child; that miracle was performed a great many hundred years ago. I was not alive then."

Miriam gazed intently on the wrinkles of the face before her, as if she could hardly believe there ever had been a time when her grandfather was not alive.

"But," she said, after a long look, "the poetry is about people now. It says how glad you'll be if you bring just one soul to Jesus. Did you ever bring anybody to Jesus, grandfather?"

Mr. Joyce shook his head, and began moving his knees, as if he wanted Miriam to get down.

"Isn't it time for you to go to bed, my dear?" said he.

"Why, no, grandfather; you can't see the figures on the clock very well. It's only half-past seven, and I never go to bed before half-past eight. I'm sure I should turn into a mouse, as Mrs. Bunce says, if I should sleep from now till to-morrow morning. Hold your

knees good, so I can get up there again ;” and she established herself more securely in her favourite position.

“Grandfather—” began the child, after a short pause.

“Well, my darling?”

“Did you ever give a lot of money to poor people?”

“No, Miriam,” was the answer, this time with a slight sternness in the thin voice. “Your grandfather is a poor man himself, and has no money to waste on vagrants.”

“Poor!” the child repeated, with strange perplexity in her tone.

“Yes, poor; ay, and getting poorer every day.”

“Dear grandfather, I am so sorry,” said Miriam, with great pity and tenderness in her tone. “But we have so many handsome things; couldn’t you sell them and get money for them?”

“Not much, child—not much. They were handsome once, but they are wearing out—just so much money thrown away. Yesterday I found a little thin place in that table-cover—a thing that cost I cannot tell you how many dollars.”

"A thin place! Show it to me, please; maybe I can mend it."

"There it is," said Christopher, putting his finger on the spot; "don't you see it with your bright young eyes?"

"Yes, I see," replied Miriam, bending over the table to examine the spot. "Why, it's moth; I'm sure it has been eaten by moth. Yes, there is another spot. Why, grandfather, how dreadful to have your nice things all moth-eaten!"

Miriam did not know the text, and to Mr. Joyce it was an unwillingly remembered sentence, but there it was. The child's remark had brought it freshly before his mind: "Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten."

There was a long-drawn sigh:

"Yes, I am poor—very poor, my child. Perhaps you and grandfather will both have to go to the poor-house to live one of these days."

After this the old man and the child sat silent for a long time, thinking their own thoughts. Tears filled Miriam's eyes, less at the thought of having to live in the poor-house than because her grandfather was so un-

happy ; and her little brain was at work contriving some plan by which she could earn money to keep him from suffering.

It was Mr. Joyce who at last broke the silence :

“And if we were not so poor, darling, if you had money to do just what you wanted, tell me, what would you do with it ?”

The usual brightness came back to the little girl’s eyes and glowed in her round cheeks as she answered :

“If you were as rich as I thought you were, grandfather, I would coax you to give me money to build a house—a house as big as this, maybe bigger ; and I would have it all clean and nice inside, with pretty little rooms up stairs just like mine, with pictures in them, too, and down stairs I would have a kitchen and a very large dining-room.”

“Ay ; and who should live in your big house, my pet ?”

“All the poor children, grandfather ; there are some, I know, a great deal poorer than we are. Mrs. Bunce has told me so, and I have seen them myself too. Whenever I go out to walk I see girls and boys with their clothes all torn and dirty, and some of them look so sor-

rowful, grandfather. It is the same kind of children that come here often to get the scraps we leave at dinner."

"And Mrs. Bunce gives them to them, does she?—takes the food from my table to give it to these ragged wretches, does she? Ring that bell, Miriam; I will dismiss the woman at once. No wonder I am getting poor!"

The thin old face quivered and grew pale with sudden anger, and a great groan escaped the excited man's lips. Miriam was terrified; she had never seen her grandfather look so before; she wanted to plead for Mrs. Bunce, the kind-hearted woman who had done so much to make her life less dreary, but she was afraid.

"Ring that bell! Do you hear me?" commanded the angry voice again; and Miriam tremblingly obeyed.

Then, finding that in his agitation her grandfather took no notice of her, she silently escaped from the room and went up stairs to bed. To bed? No, I should not say that, for the clock struck and struck again, and still a small figure knelt in the moonlight, sobbing so pitifully that the canary was disturbed in its sleep and fluttered about the cage, as frightened as its mistress had been.

Miriam prayed and prayed, with an earnestness she had never before felt, for her poor grandfather. She told God how very poor he was, and begged that he would make him rich. Ah! God knew much better than that sad little pleader just how poor Christopher Joyce was; he was ready to make him rich, too, in a better way than Miriam asked, if only he could be brought to desire such riches as the Lord loves to bestow.

The next day Mrs. Bunce was sent away, and another person engaged in her place. The new housekeeper was a sharp-faced woman whose mouth turned down at the corners, and who never cooked enough of anything for the family to eat all they wanted. The beggars that came to the door after Mrs. Scranby came in power were not apt to show their faces there again.

The master of the house was well pleased with the change, and often complimented Mrs. Scranby on her prudent management.

"I see you have learned that wise adage, 'Waste not, want not,' " he was wont to say as he passed through the kitchen and saw that the swill-pail had nothing in it but very clean bones and very thin parings.

But a shadow had come over Miriam's life, Her grandfather was poor; what could she do to help him? She resolved that she must have no more costly dresses, no dolls, no story-books. The money that was given her every month so liberally—for the miser's stinginess had never extended to aught affecting the comfort of his darling grand-daughter—must be saved for only necessary uses.

The day after Mrs. Bunce's dismissal the governess was surprised as she ascended the stairs at meeting a little figure very plainly dressed with a hat and shawl on and a large bundle in her arms.

“What! going out at this hour, Miriam? Why, it is time for your lessons; and with that great bundle too! Tell me, my dear, what is the matter?” and while she spoke Miss Marvin gently took the bundle, and placing her arm about the little quivering form, led the way up stairs; and taking her pupil in her lap, she drew from her the cause of her distress.

Miriam's sensitive heart was still suffering keenly from the shock it had so lately received, and the tears came quickly in answer to her teacher's expression of sympathy.

“Grandfather is very poor, Miss Marvin,” she said. “I did not know it until Sunday night; and now it is very wicked for me to keep all these nice clothes; other poor people’s children do not wear such clothes as I have. I was going just now—that is, I will go after school—to see if I can sell them and get some money for grandfather.”

It was well Miriam’s head was turned aside while she spoke, so that she did not see the mingled expression of pity and amusement that flitted over her teacher’s face. They had a long talk together, the teacher and pupil; and though Miss Marvin could not convince the child that her grandfather was not really so poor as to need her sacrifice, she yet succeeded in persuading her to put off selling her clothing until she had a talk with him.

It is needless to say the clothes were never sold.

In the course of time there came a day when the great arm-chair stood empty, and the sound of the handsome clock ticking its unvaried tune fell upon no ears but the unheeding ones of the bronze warriors. The rich tints of curtains and furniture were reflected in the tall mirrors, but not in human eyes. The grand

house was even drearier than was its wont, because the master and owner of all its grandeur lay in his bed hopelessly ill. Yes, old Christopher Joyce was learning that there is something even mightier than *Money*. A terrible power held his poor frame in a grasp from which money could not release him. Over and over again on his wasted and trembling fingers he counted the thousands invested in railroad stocks, the thousands represented in real estate, the amounts laid up in the bank. Poor Christopher! he could not reckon, with all these, a treasure laid up in heaven; he had never thought of investing any capital there.

When his physician plainly told him that he thought his case hopeless, Christopher had flown into a passion and bidden him leave the house. He sent for another, and yet a third; but each told the terrified man the same truth: he was about to die. In despair he called for a minister to come and pray with him. The minister came, exhorted the aged sinner to repent of his sins, and prayed that they might be forgiven. But the minister's words only increased his distress. "Repent!" He did not know how. If the Lord would have been satisfied with his paying over a certain amount

to the church, he would have seen his way clear. But Christopher could not buy ease for his conscience thus.

Sad days were these for little Miriam. Feared and disliked as the sick man had been by all other children, to Miriam he was the dear grandfather, all the friend she had in the world. All her comfort now was to sit by the bed and hold the wrinkled hands in her own soft white ones, to bathe the aching head and whisper, from the depths of her sorrowing heart, "Grandfather, dear, dear grandfather, how I love you!" Now and then, when there came hours of complete consciousness—these became more rare each day—the child would of her own accord repeat the texts which she had learned at Sunday-school, and even attempt to sing her little hymns; but she soon gave up such efforts for fear of breaking down and ending the verses with a sob instead of a chorus.

It was just about dusk when she entered the sick-room one day. She came on tip toe, for her grandfather appeared to be asleep, and sat in her usual place at the bedside. Presently the sick man opened his eyes and fixed them full upon her face.

“Miriam!” said he. It was but a faint whisper, but she heard, and bent her ear close to the pale lips to catch every word. “‘Barley Loaves!’ Say it to me.”

Miriam had to pause a moment to think what her grandfather meant. All at once there flashed across her mind a remembrance of that unhappy Sunday evening when she had repeated the poem, sitting on his knee, had asked him those daring questions, and finally had brought about Mrs. Bunce’s dismissal by her thoughtless words. Strange that for one moment she could have forgotten anything connected with that scene.

With a great effort she repeated the poem from beginning to end. As she uttered the last words the dying man motioned for her to come nearer; she bent her head again to catch his faintly uttered words:

“You wished for money to build a house for poor children; you shall have it.”

The effort of speaking had been too much for the weak frame. The sick man sunk back and closed his eyes. For hours he lay unconscious; he scarcely seemed to breathe; then he roused himself again, gazed around the room, as if trying to assure his mind that all was

right ; and at last, with a shrill cry that sent a chill to the hearts of his attendants, he uttered these words :

“ My barley loaf ! Will it—will it save my soul ? ”

The pale lips never spoke again. Christopher Joyce died without an answer to that question. Perhaps the dreadful answer was already heard in his soul when that shrill cry expressed his anguish.

There was a very grand funeral ; there was a long paragraph in the daily paper telling of the loss that had befallen the community in the death of one of its most honoured and honourable citizens, Christopher Joyce. The carriages went back from the funeral ; that day's paper got torn up, like all other papers, and the honourable citizen was forgotten.

His executors thought of him, to be sure, so long as his business affairs remained to be settled ; the few tradesmen who had bills against the estate remembered him till these were paid ; and perhaps the poor whose hearts he had crushed, whose homes he had spoiled, remembered him too.

There was only one human being in all the world who thought of him with gratitude and

love, only one true mourner : that was Miriam. She knew not his sins ; she knew all there was to know of his goodness.


When, in due time, the will was read, nearly the whole of the miser's wealth was found bequeathed to Miriam Joyce.

In one of our smaller cities, when strangers ask to be told the chief objects of interest, they are sure to be taken to a spacious building planned and furnished with a wise thought for the comfort of those for whom it was designed, filled with orphan children. Chief among the women who act the part of mothers to the motherless they may see one who still has the sunny hair and deep quiet eyes that marked the little girl sitting on Christopher Joyce's knee so many years ago.

The child's longing has become the woman's life-work.

CHAPTER V.

A PLANT WITHOUT A ROOT.

OPHIE KELSO and her mother sat in their pleasant breakfast-room one morning, the one busy looking over the day's mail, which had just been brought in, the other leisurely arranging bouquets from a lapful of brilliant autumn flowers.

“Look, mamma! Did you ever see a finer shade of purple? I wish you would take this dahlia to Langley & Smith's and buy me a dress just to match it—that is, if you can find anything so pretty in dry-goods. But here's a crimson one just as lovely. How would crimson become me, mamma?” and Sophie held the gay flower up to her pretty face, and glanced in the mirror to gain its opinion as well as her mother's.

Mrs. Kelso put down the letter she was reading and looked at her daughter.

“Yes, dear,” she answered, “the dahlia is beautiful; but as to your having a new dress,

you certainly do not need another this fall. Here is a paper for you; I think it is your aunt Lizzie's writing on the cover. Open it, and see." Mrs. Kelso tossed the paper into Sophie's lap as she spoke.

"It's only one of those Sunday-school things that Aunt Lizzie is always sending," said the girl. "Oh, here is something marked. Well, I'll read it when I come back from school. I must hurry with these flowers, or I shall be late. Dear me! How 'tempus' does 'fugit,' as our Latin scholars say! I wonder if any other girl in this town has so much to do as I have?"

Sophie moved about briskly as she talked, and appeared to be accomplishing a great deal; but somehow the flowers would not go together as she wished; one rose had to be changed about at least half a dozen times; then she discovered that the vase was not large enough; and finally, with a petulant motion, she scattered her flowers on the table, saying, "There! you fix them, mamma," and darted up stairs in search of her hat and books.

Mrs. Kelso sighed heavily as the shutting of the street door announced Sophie's departure for school.

“Will she ever be anything but a thoughtless, wilful girl?” she asked herself. Then she picked up the flowers and arranged them, and before leaving the room she took Sophie’s paper and read the poem that was marked. “I wish that would make some impression on Sophie,” she said to herself; “she never thinks of any one’s happiness but her own.”

No wonder the thought made Mrs. Kelso sigh; if she could have seen things in the light that other people saw them, she perhaps would have sighed a second time. Everybody but the mother saw in Sophie a spoiled child. Her father had died when she was but four years old; her baby brother had been taken soon after; and with a comfortable home, a heart full of affection, a purse full of money, and only this one little girl on whom to lavish both love and money, what wonder that the mother suffered the child to grow up selfish and thoughtless?

When Sophie returned from school, she found on her dressing-table the little paper sent by Aunt Lizzie, with the marked verses folded out, so that her eyes fell on them at once. She read them while she brushed and braided her hair and changed her dress for dinner.

"Very good poetry, no doubt," was her mental comment, "but I don't see what Aunt Lizzie sent it to me for."

She threw aside the paper, and perhaps would never have thought of it again but that her mother inquired at dinner how she liked "Barley Loaves."

"Oh, well enough," said Sophie; "but who cares for poetry? There are so many more interesting things to read that nobody but old maids like Aunt Lizzie can afford to waste time on it. But what makes you look so serious, mamma? Don't! I can't bear to see people serious;" and to strengthen her remark the gay girl began humming the words,

"It is better to laugh than be sighing."

"I wish I could see you more serious yourself, my daughter. When I read those verses, I thought, 'If only Sophie would learn a lesson from these, how happy it would make me!'" Mrs. Kelso spoke with unusual gravity, and Sophie was subdued by the earnest tone of her voice.

"But how, mamma? What lesson? I hardly understand what you mean."

"Suppose you get the paper now while Jane

is clearing off the table and read the verses to me."

Sophie did as she was requested.

"Now, can you not find a lesson there, my child?"

"Yes; I suppose it means that if a person has but little to give, if he only makes use of that little he can do good with it. Is that the interpretation?"

"I think so, dear, provided that what he gives or does is offered to the Lord, for you know the mere giving does not accomplish much; it is the blessing of Christ upon the gift."

"Of course; but I am not religious, mamma."

"No, my child; I wish that you were."

"Well, if you will propose any good work for me to do, I'll try my very best at it, just to please you, mamma."

"That is spoken like a dear girl," said Mrs. Kelso, with a glad smile. "What do you think of taking a class in Sunday-school? I heard Mr. Warner complaining lately of the lack of teachers. It would be a very good work for you to take charge of a few of the younger ones."

"Well, mamma, if it will give you any pleasure, I am sure I am willing to try. But that only comes once a week ; what else can I do to keep away that solemn look from your face?"

"That will do for a beginning. I would not undertake too many things at once."

Sophie kissed her mother, and was off to the parlour to practice for an hour. The cloud was lifted from Mrs. Kelso's heart.

"The dear child!" she said to herself; "I believe, with all her faults, that there is nothing Sophie would not undertake for love of me. I ought to forgive all the rest."

When Sunday afternoon came, Sophie remembered her promise, and was punctual at the basement of the church, where the school was held.

"Ah, Miss Kelso!" said the superintendent, coming forward to meet her; "I am indeed glad to see you here. Will you take a seat in my Bible class, or have you come to offer your aid in teaching one of these uncared-for classes?"

Sophie enjoyed being addressed as "Miss Kelso," it had such a grown-up sound. As she had lived all her life in the same place, and

every one knew her as "little Sophie Kelso," it was not often she was spoken to with such respect. At sixteen it is very pleasant to have people treat one with proper deference.

"If you have a class to give me, Mr. Warner, I prefer teaching. Mamma wants me to try to help a little in that way."

Mr. Warner bowed and led Sophie to a seat where there were five boys who seemed to be about ten or twelve years old. He handed the young lady a chair and a book, showed her the lesson for the day, and was off attending to some other class before she could utter a word.

The bell rang; the opening service was soon concluded, and work began. Sophie turned to her class, and asked the first question in the lesson. Nobody answered.

"Can you tell me," she said, addressing the boy at the end of the seat, "how many persons were saved in the ark?"

In a drawling voice, the boy began repeating:

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field."

"You did not hear the question, I think," said Sophie. "I asked you how many persons were saved in the ark."

The boy began again, more stupidly than before :

“Now the serpent was more subtle—”

“You stupid fellow!” said Sophie; “that is not the question.”

“But that’s the right answer, teacher,” said the next boy. “You’ve got the wrong place.”

Sophie turned to the page indicated by her informant and read out the question: “What character is attributed to the serpent?”

Number two began in a sing-song voice:

“And he said unto the woman—”

“Oh dear, dear!” exclaimed the young teacher, getting nervous; “why don’t you listen to the question?”

“I answered right; it was you who asked wrong,” said the boy, sullenly. “You just look and see if that ain’t the answer to the second question there in the book.”

Sophie paused a moment to consider how to proceed; she had never before come in contact with such minds as these. Would it not be better to read to them the third chapter of Genesis, explaining as she went along? While she was considering the matter a scuffle arose between the two boys at the other end of the seat.

"Be quiet this minute!" said Sophie, sharply;
"I won't have such actions."

"He pinched me, he did," whined number four.

"He got my knife out of my pocket, teacher," growled number five, in a voice that all the school might hear.

"Give me that knife," demanded Sophie;
"I'll keep it until school is dismissed."

"No, yer don't!" said number five. "It's my knife, and you ain't goin' to have it any more'n him."

Sophie felt like a general who sees an inglorious defeat awaiting him and no loop-hole of escape. Her cheeks burned with indignation; she felt like using some pretty strong language toward her unruly pupils, but was restrained by a doubt whether that would be quite proper in her present character of Sunday-school teacher.

While she was thinking, the boys continued quarrelling, and the superintendent, whose attention was now drawn to their disorderly conduct, presently came and stood beside her.

"Indeed, Mr. Warner," began poor Sophie,
"I can't—"

"Yes, yes, I see just how it is," he answered,

interrupting her; "I ought not to have put these rough youngsters in your charge. How is this, Thomas Jones? What does it mean, Robert Wilkes?" he continued, turning to the offenders. "When a young lady comes to teach you, can't you behave better than this? For shame!"

One of the boys hung his head and made no answer, but the one called Thomas Jones, the owner of the property in dispute, said, in a low but surly voice:

"It's my knife, anyhow; Bob sha'n't have it, nor her, nuther."

Mr. Warner succeeded in getting the knife safe in the pocket of its owner, then said in a low voice to Sophie:

"I think I will take charge of these boys myself the rest of the hour, and I will give you a more agreeable class on the other side of the room. Come with me, Miss Kelso."

"Thank you, Mr. Warner, but I believe I will not stay any longer to-day. If you will relieve me of this charge, I think I had better go home."

It was with difficulty that Sophie restrained her tears long enough to say these words and to bow in recognition of Mr. Warner's expres-

sions of regret that she should have been subject to any annoyance, and of hope that she would come again the following Sunday and take another class.

Scarcely had she closed the door behind her before they came, those tears of mortification and anger, and as she hurried home she promised herself most positively that nothing should induce her to undertake a class in Sunday-school again so long as she lived—no, not even to please her mother would she do it.

Here, then, was Sophie Kelso's first barley loaf; it had fed no soul, it had received no blessing, because it had not been offered to Christ.

Mrs. Kelso was grieved indeed to hear the result of her daughter's effort. She had hoped that a class in Sunday-school might prove a starting-point with Sophie which would lead to other works of benevolence, and that gradually she would grow into habits of unselfishness and kindly deeds. Mistaken mother! Characters do not grow without roots, any more than rose-bushes; how could the fragrant flowers of holiness adorn a plant that is not rooted in Christ? "If she gets in the way of thinking and working for others," mused Mrs. Kelso,

“in time she will mature into a lovely Christian. Flowers first and roots afterward.” The pretty garden from which Sophie gathered her flowers each day would have fared badly, had its owner applied her views of soul-culture to the training of plants.

By the time Sunday came again the indignation and despair caused by her previous attempt were so far softened that Sophie yielded again to her mother’s persuasion, and consented to try once more what she could do at teaching a class. Mr. Warner gave her a cordial welcome. He had feared, from the disturbed face with which she went away before, that she would not come again, and was really glad when he found that she had not been wholly discouraged, for he needed all the assistance he could obtain. A class of six little girls was this time entrusted to her. They were all well-behaved children, and knew their lesson with tolerable exactness. One offered Sophie a bunch of flowers; another, when the lesson was ended, put up her lips for a kiss; and the only misdemeanour that occurred was a loud whisper of one child to another of—“Isn’t the teacher real pretty?” Sophie’s reproof was not very severe.

“Well, how about Sunday-school this time?” was Mrs. Kelso’s eager question on her return.

“It was quite a different affair to-day, mamma. I had some nice little girls to teach, and they did not trouble me at all.”

“Then did you tell Mr. Warner you would keep your class and attend regularly?”

“No; I did not say anything to him about it. It is a bother to feel obliged to do anything regularly, week after week, whether one feels like it or not. But if it will be any satisfaction to you, mamma, I am willing to try it, until cold weather anyway.”

The delighted mother gave Sophie a hearty kiss by way of answer, and then said she would write to Aunt Lizzie the very next day to let her know what good use her niece had made of the suggestions contained in the poem she had marked.

As the fall advanced everything received a new impulse, and plans were being formed constantly for winter amusement and winter work. Sophie’s time was so taken up with school duties and practicing that her mother had never thought of imposing anything else on her. All the sewing of the family was given into the hands of a seamstress, except

the weekly mending, which Mrs. Kelso usually attended to. As for Sophie, if her glove was ripped, she put it on her mother's basket to be mended, and the idea of sitting down to do a piece of sewing, except, indeed, a very occasional bit of fancy-work, would have appeared to her simply ridiculous.

"Sewing is so tiresome," said Sophie; "and when there are so many people who have to do it for a living, what's the use of my pricking my fingers over it?"

One afternoon two young ladies called to ask Sophie to join a missionary society that had just been formed among the younger portion of the congregation. As Sophie was engaged with her music-teacher, Mrs. Kelso received them, and listened to an account of the work they proposed to do. The society was to hold weekly meetings through the winter at the houses of its different members. A certain sum was to be contributed at the outset, to be expended in material. The meetings were to be kept up more for the purpose of holding consultation than anything else, also to get in what money they could from the gentlemen who would attend; the work was to be ready, and each member was expected to take a gar-

ment home to make, and bring it, finished, at the next meeting.

"Very good!" said Mrs. Kelso, when this had been explained to her; "but let me inquire now what the object of your society is."

"We have promised to make up a box of clothing to send to some missionaries in India. That will be our first work, and will take us some time, probably. You see, ma'am, we need all the help we can get, and we are very anxious to have Sophie join us."

"When do you meet?" Mrs. Kelso asked.

"On Thursday evenings," was the answer.

"I hardly know what to say for Sophie," said the mother, musingly; "the poor child is so occupied all day with her school and her music; but I will tell her about your project. I don't doubt she will feel interested, and I think I can promise that she will join you and do all that she can."

"Thank you, and we shall be very glad," said the young ladies, rising to go. "We shall expect to see her, then, at Marcia Turner's next Thursday evening."

"I have no doubt Sophie will be delighted to go," responded Mrs. Kelso. The young ladies bowed, and the door closed.

“What is it that Sophie will be delighted to do?” inquired the owner of the name, putting her head out of the music-room door. “An invitation to a party, mamma? a ride? Tell me quickly.”

“Has mademoiselle gone?”

“Not yet; but tell me what it is, and I will go back.”

“No, no,” Mrs. Kelso answered, laughing. “Finish your lesson, and then I will tell you.”

She turned away with a little doubt stirring in her heart as to whether, after all, her daughter would be so delighted as she had said.

“But perhaps, when she sees how much I wish it, the dear child will consent,” thought the mother, hopefully.

Pretty soon Sophie’s voice was heard in the hall, singing fragments of the waltz she had just been playing. She entered the parlour with an expectant look on her bright face, and threw herself on a cushion at her mother’s feet.

“I’m ready now, you see, to hear what is to make me ‘delighted.’ Be quick, mamma! It seems ever so long since I had any real good time. Which of those girls was it that brought the invitation?”

"What invitation, dear?"

"There! don't tease me any longer with your silence and sober looks. Didn't I hear something about next Thursday evening? I could not tell which of them said that, but I heard your reply distinctly enough, accepting the invitation for me."

"I am afraid you will be disappointed, dear child. They only came to beg you to join a missionary society just being organized by the young folks of the church. The next meeting is to be at Marcia Turner's on Thursday evening. I thought you would be pleased to aid in their good work, and told them so."

"Is that all?" poor Sophie asked, in a changed voice. "It is too bad!" she continued, after a moment's silence. "Everybody else has good times, but there don't seem to be anything for me but study, study, study, and for a change teaching Sunday-school children and doing missionary work." There was a little bitterness creeping into both face and voice as the young girl spoke.

"I am very sorry that you feel so," said Mrs. Kelso; and she smoothed the bright braids of hair that lay so near her hand, just as she wished she could smooth the ruffled

feelings of their owner's heart. "I want to be able to tell Aunt Lizzie of some more barley loaves, you know."

"Oh, mamma, what does Aunt Lizzie care? She is very good, to be sure, and wants to make everybody else so—that is all. I would do anything in the world for you, mamma; but as for Aunt Lizzie and all the rest of the people, I am not going to bother myself about their good opinion."

"Would you really do anything in the world for me, darling?" questioned the mother.

"Certainly; don't you believe me?" and Sophie looked up from her lowly seat with such an expression of affection in her eyes that nobody could have doubted her sincerity.

"Well, dear, it would please me very much indeed to have you join this society. Think how much good you may do for those poor missionaries who have left their homes and all that makes life happy to go and live among the heathen!"

"But how am I to do them good, mamma? I feel ever so sorry for them, if that will benefit them."

"The girls are intending to get up a box of clothing to send to India. You would do

better to express your sorrow by using your needle in behalf of the missionaries."

"Oh, you know, mamma, how I do hate sewing. I should be ashamed to let those girls see me at it, I am so slow and clumsy."

"But you are not to do the work at the meetings, child; you are just to go and spend a pleasant evening and bring home an article to make."

"Then I can get Miss Burns to do it for me, can't I, mamma? If I pay for the work, it will amount to the same thing."

"If I pay for it, I suppose you mean," said the mother, playfully, well pleased at securing Sophie's interest in the society even on such terms.

"It's all the same, though," said Sophie.

"Then you will join the society, won't you?"

"If you'll promise to get all the sewing done for me, I suppose I shall have to. I said I would do anything in the world for you, mamma. And that counts another barley loaf for me, don't it?" Sophie asked the question with a laugh that betokened a return to her usual good humour. "I'm off now to finish that book Belle Monfort lent me, so that I can return it to her to-morrow. It's a splendid

book. I wish you liked novels, mamma; I'd bring it in here and read it aloud to you if you did."

Sophie was out in the hall by the time her last words were spoken, and she went tripping up stairs, quite forgetful of her momentary disappointment.

Mrs. Kelso put down the sewing she had been busy with until Sophie's entrance, and seated herself at the window to watch the twilight coming on. Her thoughts were busy, as usual, with Sophie. She was not quite as satisfied with the character of these barley loaves as the young girl herself was. It was pleasant, indeed, to have her willing to perform disagreeable duties just for the sake of pleasing her mother, but, after all, was she really gaining anything in Christian character by such deeds? Mrs. Kelso unwillingly owned to herself that she was not. "But"—she answered her own questionings as she always did—"this is only the starting-point; better motives will come in time."

Sophie went to the missionary society, and to her mother's great satisfaction she soon became very much interested. The fact was that the meetings soon grew to be simply social re-

unions of the young folks of her set. Nobody did any work on those occasions. Then, as Sophie was always ready to take home as large a bundle of sewing as any one, and never failed to bring it back neatly finished, she gained the name of being one of the most valuable members of the society. More and more her companions got in the way of asking her opinion and advice, of depending on her for extra work, of asking her to make up any little deficiency in the funds. The work was always performed by the seamstress ; the money was willingly given by her mother, who was overjoyed at finding her so interested in good works.

To one of Sophie's character such approval and deference was very sweet ; and although she joined the society so unwillingly at first, she soon came to enjoy the meetings exceedingly, and to think it a fine thing to be benevolent. So many blossoms there were, but no root ! Everybody saw and praised the blossoms, and nobody doubted but that the root was strong and vigorous. Sophie herself was deceived, for she easily learned to think that these good works in which she so eagerly engaged were the whole of religion. She had plenty of

barley loaves, but, alas, alas! not one had yet been offered to Jesus.

During the winter a great deal of interest was manifested in the church services; the prayer-meetings were well attended; the Spirit of God was at work in the hearts of many that had hitherto been careless. The good pastor felt that all his prayers for his flock were about to be answered; and stimulated by this hope, he preached such ardent appeals to those who had not yet tasted that the Lord is gracious that the hearts of his people were melted to unwonted tenderness. Many began with faltering steps to tread the heavenly way; many old Christians became inspired with new zeal in the Master's service. Among Sophie's school-mates and special friends quite a number became earnest in seeking their souls' salvation.

Mrs. Kelso watched her child with an anxious hope that the time had come for that great change which should make Sophie all that she desired. Other than the mother's eyes watched her also, fully expecting that such a zealous and exemplary young person would take the first opportunity of uniting with the church.

In the midst of all this, Sophie herself remained calm and composed. She knew what

her mother desired and what her friends expected. A few months before, the idea of taking such a step would have distressed her ; but now that she was an experienced teacher in the Sunday-school, a prominent member of the missionary society, and engaged in other good works which had grown out of these, it seemed to her, as to others, quite the proper thing that she should make a profession of religion. As for those deep heart-experiences of which her companions talked, she had nothing of the sort to relate. The glowing love with which they spoke of what Jesus had done for their souls awakened no response in her breast. The tears of repentance which others shed seemed to her a very needless waste of emotion. She did not care to talk with anybody much about her spiritual state. Her pastor attributed this to natural reserve, and her mother was satisfied with the fact that she was willing to come forward and profess herself a follower of Christ, hoping, as she always hoped, that things would all come right in time.

Thus Sophie Kelso began her Christian life. May none who read these pages so enter upon theirs !

The years of girlhood passed on—active,

busy years they were. One good work after another was projected and carried out. Miss Kelso's purse, Miss Kelso's influence, were always to be depended upon in any benevolent enterprise. The work demanded of her was not disagreeable. The respect and admiration it ensured pleased her well. The heart of her mother was satisfied, and the church, Sophie believed, could hardly be sustained without her. The sunshine unfolded the beautiful flowers of her religious profession, and fair they were to view.

But at last a storm came—such a storm as causes the roots of true Christian character to sink more deeply in the soil which nourishes them and hold more firmly there. Not so with the plant whose life was all expended in blossoms which had no root at all. A description is given of just such in the parable of the sower: “Because they had no root, they withered away.”

Unlooked for misfortune came upon the widow and her daughter; their wealth was suddenly swept away; the pleasant home, the luxuries of a lifetime, had all to be given up at once. They rented a rough-looking cottage, ill contrived and out of repair, without a vine

or a tree near enough to lend it the grace needful to genteel poverty. Friends said: "It will be easy for Sophie to make a living with her needle; her work for the missionary society was always so beautifully done." Little did they suspect that Sophie's purse had performed that work, and not her needle. Others proposed that she should give music lessons.

"No, indeed," said the young lady; "people need not think I am coming down to that drudgery. The truth was that working for applause was one thing, and working for a living, and without applause, quite another."

Sophie grumbled at the Providence which had taken away her wealth and lowered her to the position of those she had formerly condescended to relieve with her bounty. Fellow-Christians spoke to her of resignation to God's will. Sophie scowled at the word; she did not wish to be resigned.

"When she was doing so much good with her money, why did God take it from her?" she said.

Every chance for gaining a living that was offered Sophie obstinately refused:

"If her mother chose to take boarders, she had no objection, though she did not see how

that was possible, in their little box of a house ; or if Aunt Lizzie should invite them to her home until they could decide on the future, that would be better still."

People were astonished. Was it possible, they said to one another, that such ardent piety as she had seemed to possess had dwindled to this ? Could all those years of benevolence and doing for others have been merely a cloak for utter selfishness ?

Aunt Lizzie came with a heart brimming over with sympathy to see her sister and niece, to take them home with her if they would go. They gladly accepted the invitation. Mrs. Kelso, good and gentle though she was, had too little of what we call "character" to stand up under the heavy blow that had befallen her. Hardly less grievous to her was the disappointment she sustained in finding out the real barrenness of her daughter's religion. She had hoped so long, and then believed so entirely, that now she had no strength ever to hope and believe again. Even Aunt Lizzie's cheerful, loving spirit failed to rouse her from the dull apathy into which she had fallen. This state of mind had its effect upon her body ; and when, after a few months, some

trifling disorder attacked her, she sank hopelessly under its power and died.

And Sophie! All that is to be told of her is that a gloomy-faced, sharp-voiced woman still lives with the dear old aunt whose light step and sunshiny countenance prevent the house from being the gloomy place it would be if only her companion lived there. The neighbours all know Miss Kelso as one who has seen better days, and generally speak of her with pity. Nobody thinks of asking her to belong to a charitable society; nobody comes to her for advice. The children are afraid of her, and the sorrowful never look in her face for sympathy or comfort. The life of this woman is filled up with a few household cares, the reading of frivolous books, a little fancy-work, a good deal of grumbling at her own lot and criticising her neighbours' characters.

Let us hasten to leave such unpleasant companionship. Let us remember Sophie Kelso only to avoid being what she is—a plant without a root.

CHAPTER VI.

SALLIE BOKER'S ONE TALENT.

TWO girls stood in a photograph-gallery looking at the proof of a picture.

"The freckles all show as plain as can be," said the one most interested.

"That nose too! I wonder if my nose does turn up quite so bad as that? Such eyes! I believe I'll ink them a little when we get home just to let Reuben see that there are really eyes there. What a faded-out-looking girl I must be! I did so want to send a decent picture to the dear boy. Anyhow, there's a good deal of love in that face, homely as it is, and that's what brother Reuben cares the most about."

Sally Boker had been giving a very true description of herself while criticising the photograph. The reality as well as the portrait was a combination of freckles, turned-up nose, pale blue eyes, and love. When the six brothers and sisters at home looked up in her

face, they saw but the love that shone through the features like a light through a lantern. Who cares, in going out on a dark night, whether the frame of his lantern is handsome or not? If the lamp within burns clear and bright, that is enough for any reasonable traveller.

There were, as I just said, six children at home, four boys and two girls, all of them younger than Sallie. There was one brother several years older who had lately gone to the West to seek his fortune. It was for him that she had been getting her picture taken. The girl who went to the gallery with Sallie to see the proof was Hatty Halsey, her next-door neighbour.

The walk home had to be a brisk one, for it was Saturday morning, and Saturday morning means, at any rate among country folks, baking, scouring, scrubbing, and a general effort to get everything in order for the holy rest of the Sabbath.

When the two girls turned the corner which brought them in sight of both their homes, the first object that met their eyes was two-year-old Jasper, the youngest of the Boker family, on his back in a mud-puddle, moving his arms

and legs about wildly, just as a clumsy bug would in the same position, and at the same time screaming with all his might. Hatty was the first to reach the scene, and darted forward to pick up the child; but when she saw the mud that covered him from the great red curl on the top of his head to the little toes sticking out of the great gap in his shoe, she drew back with a timely thought of her own clean dress.

Sallie was close behind. She seized poor Jasper, regardless of her dress, and intent only on comforting the little bundle of mud and noise. If the dress was soiled, she would have to wash and iron it before night—that was all.

A dog had come and barked at Jasper, and that made him fall in the mud. Such was the account Sallie coaxed out of the poor baby between sobs and kisses.

“Oh, ma, here comes Sallie! Can’t she mend my apron, so I can go out to play again?” The voice was Janie’s.

“No; come here first, Sallie, and get this knot out of my shoe-string; please do!” called Charles.

In the midst of the general uproar Mrs. Boker came forward. A thin, weary-faced

woman she was, who knew by her own experience that proverb,

“Man’s work is from sun to sun,
But woman’s work is never done.”

“You were gone a good while, Sallie. Mrs. Brown came in of an errand, and you know, if she comes for a minute, she stays for an hour. That put me back with the bread; I haven’t done a thing to the pies yet, and here it’s well on to dinner-time. Oh dear!”

“Here, mother, you sit down in the rocking-chair and hold Jasper, while I get the sponge and some clean clothes for him. Poor little man! he fell in the mud.”

“I should think he did fall in the mud! There! set him down on my lap;” and the tired mother sank willingly in the rocking-chair and held out her arms for Jasper. “That old brown calico dress I patched last night will do for him the rest of the day,” she called after Sallie, who was halfway up stairs.

“Yes, ma’am,” came the prompt and cheery answer.

“Sallie, I think you might get a knot out of a fellow’s shoe-string,” Charlie muttered, the instant she again appeared.

"Wait one minute, Charlie."

"I don't believe you're going to mend my apron at all," whined Janie. "There's a little girl out there waiting for me to go and jump rope with her."

"Take off the apron till after dinner. Can't she, mother? Her dress is dirty, anyhow."

So Janie was disposed of; then the baby was washed and arrayed in the brown calico dress, and held up his chubby face for mother and sister to kiss. The knot in Charlie's shoe-string next received attention; and when all the little folks had their wants attended to and were quiet again, Sallie said:

"Now, mother, you sit still here and look over your paper, and I'll bake the pies and see to the dinner."

A loving kiss pressed out the wrinkle in Mrs. Boker's care-marked forehead; the paper was put in her hand, and Sallie vanished into the kitchen to execute the work already planned.

The mother leaned back in her chair and gave a sigh of satisfaction. She opened the paper and turned to the column where were reported the deaths and marriages; but while her eyes followed the printed words her thoughts

followed Sallie to the kitchen, and she said to herself :

“Not many mothers have such a daughter as that. I don’t know how in the world I should get along without Sallie.”

Twelve o’clock came, and with it “father,” ready for his dinner. The dinner was ready for him too ; and a row of clean, bright faces decorated each side of the table.

John Boker looked at them all with more gravity than was his wont ; then, addressing his wife, who sat opposite him with Jasper in her lap, he said :

“I just now saw poor Tim Wheeler staggering along the road, dead drunk, at this hour of the day ; and I said to myself, ‘John Boker, if you had such a shiftless wife as that man has, maybe you’d be reeling about that way too ;’ and when I come in and see you all so good and cheerful, I feel like falling on my knees and saying, ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul.’”

The speech was concluded by the hasty drawing of a coat-sleeve across the speaker’s eyes.

These words finished the smoothing out of the wrinkles on Mrs. Boker’s forehead, and she also cast a loving look on the rows of faces at

the table. Her eyes rested on Sallie's face, and she said :

"Bless you, John ! I couldn't manage at all if it wasn't for that big girl of ours. You may thank her for more than half your comfort."

A blush stole over the freckled face, and a glad look came into the eyes ; and Sallie Boker felt more than repaid for all the morning's labour.

"Sallie's been to look at her picture, pa," said Charlie, who always liked to have a share in the conversation.

"Has she ? Well, how does it look, Sallie?"

"Just like me, I suppose, father ; it is not very pretty, though," she replied.

"Never mind that. 'Handsome is as handsome does.' If Reuben finds a wife for himself out there in the west country, I hope she'll be handsome in the same way that his sister Sallie is."

Such a flow of affectionate compliments did not reach Sallie's ears very often ; but when they did, they stimulated her to fresh exertions for the family comfort, and made her little trials seem too light to think about at all. She went to bed that night tired in every joint

of her body, but glad at heart ; and when she knelt to say her usual prayer, she added this petition, which she happened to find in an old torn book of poems up in the garret :

“My Redeemer and my Lord,
I beseech thee, I entreat thee,
Guide me in each act and word,
That hereafter I may meet thee,
Waiting, watching, hoping, yearning,
With my lamp well trimmed and burning.”

The Sabbath came, with its welcome change from the duties of other days. It was not entirely a day of rest in the Boker family. The mother rose early to prepare the breakfast ; the father spent a longer time than usual over his toilet. The arrangement of his clean white shirt and best necktie was a matter too important to be hurried. Sallie's office was to wash six little faces, comb six little heads of hair, tie shoe-strings, button dresses, and brush jackets, until the whole number of little Bokers were in proper order for Sunday-school. Gladly would she have gone with them, as Hatty Halsey often coaxed her to do, but that would have belated her mother about getting ready for church, and it always fell to her lot to wash the dishes and prepare the Sunday dinner. The

afternoon was her own, and she always attended church then ; but as for Sunday-school, that was a much desired but impossible enjoyment.

When the children came back—for Jasper and Katy were too young to remain through the morning meeting—Sallie took off their best clothes and substituted others, clean but more common. Then she took them on her lap, one on each side, to read them a story from the paper they had brought, before it was time to put on the potatoes to boil. Before the story was half finished Jasper's head drooped, and he begged to be laid on the lounge. Katy strayed off in search of the cat, and so Sallie had the rare blessing of a few moments of entire quiet. She finished the story she had been reading to the children, and then her eye fell on the words "Barley Loaves." She read the verses over twice, and then, while she peeled the potatoes, she pondered the matter, and tried to get its full meaning in her mind. To offer something to the Saviour—something that he would accept and make use of—oh what happiness that would be! But, alas !—and the tears gathered in Sallie's eyes as the thought came—she owned nothing worth the giving, and in the quiet country town where she lived there seemed no work she

could do that would make a suitable offering to the Lord.

She counted over her slender possessions, hanging on the nails in the bed-room, and put away in the old hair trunk—two half-worn calicoes, one new one, and the pretty muslin that her father had given as a birth-day present, so carefully preserved for extra occasions, a small stock of under-clothing, one pretty neck-ribbon that Reuben had sent home from the West in a letter, her Bible, her hymn-book, and two or three well-worn story-books. There was not a thing out of all these that Sallie could spare; and if she could, to whom could she give? The people in the village were all quite as well off as the Bokers, many of them far better. As for doing, what could she do but scrub and bake and patch and look after the children? She had been to school very little; she could not play on the piano nor paint pictures; even if she knew how to do these things and many others, where was she to find time for them? The tears fell in slow, big drops on the hand that held the knife with which she was paring the potatoes.

“He hath no need of me,” she said, half aloud, as she finished the last one and put it

with its companions in the pot to boil. She leaned against the mantel-piece just for a minute, and hid her eyes in her apron. Oh that she had leisure for a real good cry! But meeting would soon be out, and she must not fail to have dinner well under way when the family came home; neither should father and mother see by her eyes that she had been crying. She must live in hope, and maybe one of these days God would let her have a barley loaf to offer back to him. It never occurred to Sally that her cheerful, patient labour day after day was anything but a matter of course. She had never read those comforting lines that meet the wants of just such as she:

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

Winter set in early that year. Nobody was ready for it when it came. John Boker worked faithfully to earn the money that must be spent in fire-wood, flannel, and potatoes to keep his family in comfort when Jack Frost began his rounds. At home Sallie and her mother worked just as hard to use the money to the best advantage; to make home cheerful and

happy ; to turn the old clothes of the elders into new ones for the children ; to see that six pairs of small feet were well covered with stockings, six pairs of hands provided with mittens, and the little bodies to which these belonged all properly protected against the cold. These were busy times indeed.

One morning when Sallie returned from market with the day's provisions in her basket, she was greatly surprised to find her father and mother sitting in the kitchen. She took in at a glance the anxious, troubled expression on both their faces, the quiet wonder in the children's eyes, the whole six being variously disposed on the laps and backs of both parents, and the open letter in the father's hand. Something unusual had happened, or he never would have come home at that hour of the day.

Sallie set down her basket and joined the group. There was a moment's lull in the conversation, caused by her entrance, and the eyes of all were fixed upon her face ; then her father addressed her with—

“Sarah, how old are you?”

“Sixteen last June, sir,” she answered, in surprise.

"I'm 'most afraid, John," said the mother, in a sober tone,

"I ain't, though ;" and the father's arm was stretched out to embrace Sallie as he spoke. "I ain't afraid to trust my girl anywheres. Read that," said he, putting the letter in her hand—"that is, if you can make it out. I can't, all of it."

"Shall I read it aloud?"

"Yes, dear, do," said Mrs. Boker.

The letter was written in great, scrawling characters on a half sheet of foolscap ; it bore the date of a small Western town, and the purport of it was to inform the friends of Reuben Boker that he was lying ill of a fever at the writer's house. He might die or he might get well—nobody could tell which ; but he was out of his mind most of the time, and kept calling for "mother" and "Sallie." There was not anybody there to take proper care of him ; and his host concluded by saying that he thought "the young man's folks ought to come out and see to him."

Sallie folded the letter and handed it back to her father. There were tears in her eyes, but this was a family trouble, not her own private distress, like the matter of the "barley loaves,"

and she could let her sorrow be seen without any selfishness.

"Poor dear Reuben!" she said; "just to think of him lying sick among strangers! What is to be done?"

The parents exchanged glances.

"Your father can't go, Sallie. We can't afford to lose his earnings just now, and bear the expense of the journey into the bargain," answered Mrs. Boker.

"Your mother can't be spared—that's one thing certain; besides, her health isn't fit for such an undertaking this time of year," said Mr. Boker.

"Then, father, mother, I don't see but you'll have to send me. I'll do better than nobody, and I know it will comfort Reuben to see a face from home."

Sallie looked at them inquiringly. Her mother now for the first time began to cry, and turned her face away; her father said:

"I was sure you would offer to go, my brave, good girl. That is just what we were talking of when you came in. It's a long distance for a young thing like you to go alone, but I don't see any other way. We can't let the poor boy lie there suffering and calling for the ones he

loves best, and not go near him. I have got a little money put aside against a rainy day. This looks like the rainy day I was saving it for. If you make up your mind to go—mind, I leave it to your own free will whether to do it or not—but if you think you'll venture, leave the work down here for your mother to see to, and you go at once and put your clothes in order. You won't need anything fancy; leave all such things behind, and only take what's serviceable and warm."

Sallie had to smile, in spite of her sorrow, at the very needless advice about fancy articles.

"I guess my old brown dress will do well enough to wear on the way under my waterproof, won't it, mother?"

"Yes, my dear; and I'll let you take my warm shawl; you'll need it a good deal more than I will, so don't say a word," added the mother, seeing that Sallie was about to refuse the sacrifice.

"And when shall I have to start, father?"

"In the stage to-morrow morning at six. Have to be up early. So, if you've got any mending or making to do, better be about it."

As soon as the children fairly understood that Sallie was going from home they began to

express their disapproval in very forcible tones. Jasper clung to her skirt and said she must take him too, while Charles threatened to lock the front door and hide the key, so that she could not get away, and Fred and George, who were the least affectionate of the younger ones, protested that if sister went off and left them they would just sit down and cry till she came back.

“You dear things, you!” said Sallie, trying to gather all six in her arms at once; “I didn’t think you cared so much for me; I don’t deserve it at all.” Then she sank down on the floor in the midst of her sisters and brothers, and they all had a hearty cry together.

There was early rising next morning for all the Boker family, and a hurried breakfast; six o’clock came very soon such cold weather. Sallie insisted on dressing the little ones, as usual; it might be a long time, she urged, before she could do it again.

In spite of the early hour, Mrs. Boker had some of Sallie’s favourite griddle-cakes and an extra good cup of coffee to strengthen the traveller for her tedious journey. The warm shawl was laid out ready for her to put on, and a basket of luncheon stood on the trunk.

Charlie was missing when the rest sat down to breakfast, but presently he came running in, breathless with haste, and put a cake of soap into Sallie's hand.

"I bought it with my own money, my very own," said the boy, proudly. "First I thought I would get you some candy, but then I remembered that you liked useful things. It smells good," said he, applying his nose to his purchase, "and I guess it will keep your hands clean all the time you're gone."

The stage came, the last "Good-bye" was spoken, and Sallie, squeezed into a corner of the back seat under shelter of a very fat old woman, started forth on her solitary journey.

The first leaving home is a great event in any girl's life. Sallie felt all the excitement of this, added to the anxiety which lay heavy on her heart about Reuben. How kind they all had been to her! how loving and tender the last words and kisses! She could have borne the parting more courageously if the children had not cried. What made them love her so? She was sure it was not because she deserved it. All through the stage-ride she was full of self-accusing remembrances of times when she had spoken sharply to the little

ones, or had failed to do the kind deed she might have done—times when she had been careless about her work and had given her mother trouble. If she lived to go to her brother and reach home again in safety, she was sure she would ever after be a kinder sister and a more obedient daughter.

It was a relief when the stage arrived at its destination and she was at liberty to move from her corner and the pressure of the fat woman's elbow. The train for the West would start in ten minutes, the driver said, and offered to get her ticket. Sally thanked him and accepted his kindness, for she was bewildered with the noise of the town, and had very little idea, in spite of her father's careful instruction, how people went to work to secure tickets and get their baggage checked. It was all over directly, and Sallie was comfortably seated, her lunch-basket safely beside her, in a car going directly through to C——, the town where Reuben was. All day and all night she must ride, and the greater part of the next day.

As the hours sped on, she thought, "Now mother must be getting dinner; now she is washing the dishes; by this time she is

sweeping ;" later still, "She is sitting down to do the mending. Oh, I wish I was there to help her !"

To think of home was dangerous ; tears were very ready to fall, and that would never do. So Sallie roused herself to look about on her fellow-passengers and see if she could get up an interest in any of them. In the seat opposite hers sat a pretty, delicate-looking woman with a baby in her arms. She kept her face turned toward the window or hidden by the baby's cloak. Sallie suspected that she too was thinking of home, and that her tears also were near the point of overflowing. She watched her neighbour with some curiosity, mingled with sympathy for her supposed loneliness.

When it came noon, and the train stopped at a place where the passengers could get dinner, Sallie did not get out, for her well-filled basket contained more than sufficient for the first day's needs. The little woman with the big baby also remained in her seat. Sallie mustered courage and offered a share of the bread and cold meat her basket contained. It was accepted gratefully, and the little woman began a conversation by asking if Sallie knew

how far it was to —, a town she had never heard of. They could not reach there until morning, the woman supposed; she dreaded the night, for baby was apt to be restless, and she had never travelled alone before. The baby's father was to meet them at the place she had mentioned, and then all her troubles would be at an end. Sallie sighed, and silently wished she could say the same for herself. A bond of sympathy was established between the two because of their common loneliness, and both were strengthened.

When it grew dark, the child fulfilled its mother's predictions, and grew very restless; anybody who did not love babies would have said "cross," but "restless" is a mother's word. Sallie offered more than once to take the little fellow, but he would not go to her; but when it grew late and he still was troublesome, she resolutely took him and bade the poor little mother try and get some sleep.

As soon as baby looked into Sallie's loving eyes he recognized her as a friend, and consented to be fondled and soothed without any further remonstrance. As soon as his shrill little voice was hushed the tired mother dropped off to sleep. Sallie covered her with

her own shawl, and sat in her corner, crooning to the little one and trying to fancy that it was Jasper she held. After a while the baby went to sleep as peacefully as if in his own cradle, and Sallie sat as one entirely alone in the silence of that carful of slumbering people. It was a comfort to close her eyes and repeat her evening prayers. More earnest than usual was her entreaty for a blessing on all the dear ones at home; more ardent her request for guidance and direction for herself. What is it that brings a soul to such child-like dependence on its heavenly Father as the separation from all its accustomed props—the entrance upon new dangers and duties?

At last the tired girl lost consciousness; like the baby in her arms, she slept as if her head pressed its accustomed pillow, and she knew nothing more until the cars stopped with a sudden jerk that nearly threw her from the seat. The grayish cold light of a winter morning came in at the window; there was a bustle of people going in and out; and presently she was fully awakened by somebody taking the child from her arms. She started up to resent the act; there stood a tall, pleasant-faced man in a fur coat grasping her late

charge with one arm, while with the other he assisted the little woman opposite to gather up her bundles. Her face beamed with happiness, for they were now at ——; this was baby's father, and, as she had prophesied, all her troubles had come to an end. She bade Sallie "Good-bye," thanking her heartily for her kindness and expressing a hope that they might meet again. They left the car, and presently the train moved on. It never occurred to Sallie that she had performed a good deed in taking care of a stranger's baby all night, but doubtless the Lord accepted this unconscious offering of a loving nature as a real barley loaf brought to him.

On the way to an entirely strange place one is apt to let imagination draw pictures not only of its general appearance, but of many little details. One decides whether the house to which one is going is likely to be painted white or brown; whether or not it has shade-trees in front; what will be the first words spoken by the friend one is to meet; and many other such details. For an hour or two after the baby and its mother left the train Sallie sat with her face close to the window, gazing out upon the monotonous landscape and

amusing herself with fancies about the room in which she would find Reuben, the people with whom he boarded, the surprise with which he would receive the intelligence that his sister had arrived and was waiting to see him.

Engaged thus in her reveries, the young girl became wholly unconscious of what was going on inside the car. The train stopped again and again ; passengers went out and others came in, and she did not observe the change. How much longer this fit of abstraction might have continued it is impossible to say, had not a violent sneeze at her side recalled her wandering thoughts to the present scene. She turned from the window to see who was the author of the startling sound. A gentleman with very white hair and a very red silk handkerchief was blowing his nose with great energy. Then came another astonishing sneeze, followed by another application of the red handkerchief. Sneeze, sneeze, sneeze, and blow, blow, blow ! Evidently the old gentleman had taken a severe cold in his head.

Everybody in the car began to look and laugh. Sally began to laugh too ; but fearing the unfortunate gentleman would perceive it and take offence, she made out to cough instead.

As soon as the sneezing subsided the old gentleman began fumbling in his pockets, on the seat, on the floor, in a vain search for something.

"Have you lost anything, sir?" asked Sally, with ready sympathy, though the remnant of a smile was still playing about the corners of her mouth.

"Yes, young woman, I have lost something," was the answer, delivered with solemn dignity—at least as much of it as a person is capable of whose nose will not allow him to pronounce half his consonants.

The speaker looked sharply at Sallie as he spoke, thinking perhaps that she might be a well-disguised pick-pocket. The survey of her honest face must have laid his doubts to rests, for he spoke again, still staring at her :

"I have sneezed off my spectacles, young woman. An excellent pair they were—gold-rimmed ones—and suited my eyes to a T."

"Indeed, I am very sorry, sir."

Before the words were fairly out of Sally's mouth the sneezing began with greater force than before. She tried not to laugh again; and with the instinct of kindness which never for a moment was wanting in Sallie Boker, she bent over and began a thorough search of the

Barley Loaves.



"Humph! found them, did you?"

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floor and the seat in front for the missing spectacles. During the first lull in her companion's nasal exercises she asked to be allowed to pass out of the seat, and began a survey of cushions and floor, and every chink and corner attainable without disturbing other passengers.

"Not much hope of the glasses if they were sent as far as this," thought Sallie as she continued peering about at the end of the car farthest from where her companion sat.

At last she noticed a shining speck that gleamed out from the careless folds of a pile of shawls, etc., and made an eager dart to snatch it. A shrill exclamation of "Oh dear me! my curls!" coming from what she had supposed only shawls, but which proved to be also the head of a sleepy passenger, made her pause and almost drop the spectacles. However, she asked pardon of the woman she had disturbed, and hastened back to restore them to their anxious owner.

The old gentleman did not express any pleasure, however; he had not even the courtesy to thank Sallie for her trouble, but took them from her hand, wiped them carefully, and put them on with only a "Humph! found them, did you?"

Sallie resumed her seat, feeling a very little bit cross that her kind offices met with so uncourteous reception. She wondered if that was a specimen of Western manners, and turned resolutely toward the window again, resolving that if another fit of sneezing should precipitate the spectacles beyond her companion's reach he might go and search for them himself; she wouldn't.

Somehow, the castle-building of the previous hour could not be resumed at will, and Sallie, growing weary of gazing out, soon turned around to see what was going on inside. The old gentleman began asking her questions as to where she was going, if she had ever been there before, and the like. Sallie answered as briefly as possible; but by persevering curiosity her neighbour learned that she was going to take care of a sick brother at C——, that this brother's name was Reuben Boker, and that he was a carpenter by trade.

"I know him," said he.

"Oh, do you, sir?" was the eager inquiry. "Then perhaps you can tell me something about Reuben? I would be so glad if you only could."

"Tell you? Humph! I can tell you that

your brother is a thriftless ne'er-do-well !
That's all I know of him."

Sallie's head drooped, and after a moment of silence she turned once more to her window. The train stopped for dinner. She would not get out, though by this time her basket was empty and she was hungry. She must not spend one cent of her money needlessly, when her father had worked so hard to gain it, and perhaps her sick brother would need it all. Nearly all the passengers got out, and she sat there watching them as they hurried to the little hotel to get dinner.

Somebody touched her on the shoulder ; she turned, and was not much pleased to see the stranger who had dared call Reuben " a thriftless ne'er-do-well." There was a large package in his hand, which he placed in her lap.

" Eat every bit of it," said he.

" No, thank you," said Sallie, and lifted the savoury-smelling paper to restore it, for she did not feel inclined to receive such a favour at his hands ; but he had disappeared without allowing her time to carry out her plan.

" After all," thought Sallie, when she found herself left with the dinner and no help for it, " he did not mean any harm, and it would be

very disagreeable in me to throw all this away, when it is paid for and I want it so badly." With this conclusion, she opened the package, and found an abundant and excellent meal, to which her hunger did full justice.

The signal was given, the passengers regained their seats, and once more the train was on its way. Sallie did not feel like having any more conversation with her crusty companion, and for a long while both were silent. By and by the gentleman fumbled in his pockets, whence he produced a pencil and an old letter. He tore off the blank half of this, sharpened his pencil, and wrote a few words; then he drew forth his pocket-book, took a leisurely survey of its contents, and selected from them two ten-dollar bills, which he folded securely in the half sheet upon which he had written, and wrote on the outside, in large, irregular characters, "Mr. Reuben Boker, C——." When the train stopped again, the gentleman got up, secured his bag and umbrella, and left the car.

"Couldn't even bid me good-afternoon!" was Sallie's first thought, for the good dinner had not utterly obliterated the unpleasant impression her companion had made by his speech about Reuben. She watched him as he entered

the station, and then lost sight of him at once, for the engine moved on. "An hour more," she thought, "and we shall reach C——." A little home-sick feeling crept into her heart, she was so tired; and now that the excitement of the journey had given place to an uneasiness about the new scenes she was about to enter, a slight mistiness came into her eyes, and she glanced downward to find her pocket and gain possession of her handkerchief. What was that in her lap? Sallie's first impulse was to open the window and shout after her late companion that he had dropped his letter. She laughed at herself the next instant, and took up the letter, thinking to see if there was any clue to the man's whereabouts. What a surprise it was to see Reuben's name upon it! She put it carefully in her pocket, and her perplexity about it gave her enough occupation during the remainder of the ride.

"C——!" called the voice of the conductor, and in a moment more Sallie stood bewildered in a rude, shed-like building which answered the purpose of a station. She was the only person who had stopped at C——, and there was no one there to meet her.

"Of course not," she said, speaking to her-

self, but half aloud; "nobody is expecting me."

She stood beside her trunk for a moment or two, considering whether it would be safe for her to leave it and walk to the first house to seek information about Reuben, but before there was time to carry out this intention she was hailed by a big boy with the words, "Hullo, stranger! Who be you lookin' for?"

Sallie eagerly questioned him, and he promptly replied that Reuben was boarding with Josh Parker, a short distance down the road. Should he take her trunk along and show the way? Sallie thankfully assented. The guide stopped at a shabby frame house, unpainted except as time had darkened it to a leaden gray, with small windows hung inside with paper shades of various colours and patterns.

There was not time to take note of more than this, for the big boy opened the door with one energetic kick, and set down the trunk within, at the same time calling out "Josh, I've brought some company for you!" He held out his hand for his payment, and as soon as it was given ran back toward the station with an uproarious whistle.

Sallie glanced around her. The room in which she stood was large, dingy, and almost destitute of furniture. In the back of it was a steep staircase, to which her attention was drawn by the sound of a heavy footstep. A pair of clumsy boots were first visible, then a rusty pair of blue pantaloons, and lastly emerged a man's face surrounded with whiskers, moustache, long hair, and a fur cap ; these being all of a colour, it was hard to tell which was hair and which was cap. A surly voice made itself heard from amidst the general bushiness, inquiring of Sallie who she was and what she wanted. Certainly this was not the welcome which had pictured itself to her during those dreary hours of gazing out of the car window ; but Sallie had a good store of common sense, and was not to be daunted because facts did not prove in accordance with fancies. She told the man who she was and what she had come for in as few words as possible.

Josh Parker gave a grunt, whether of satisfaction or the opposite she could not tell, and bade her follow him up stairs. To this Sallie objected. If Reuben were as ill as she feared, her sudden appearance at his bedside might injure him, she said.

"Nonsense!" replied her host, adding a remark that Western folks soon got the better of such womanish whims. "But come along to the kitchen, then, while I break the news to Boker. You're Sallie, ain't you?" She nodded her head.

The kitchen into which she was now introduced was a rough place indeed, but much more cheerful and home-like than the front room. A huge fire was blazing there, and at a table, busy with preparations for supper, stood a middle-aged woman whom Sallie at once knew to be Mr. Parker's wife, and a girl apparently about her own age. Both of these turned to look at her as she entered, and she was introduced by the remark :

"Here, Nancy, you look after this girl, will you? She's the Sallie that Boker talks so much about."

Josh stamped up stairs again, and Nancy came forward with a good-natured smile to help Sallie take off her things.

"Tired, ain't you?" she inquired as Sallie, having taken off her bonnet and shawl, dropped on a low chair near the fire. She waited for no answer, but disappeared for a moment through a door at the other side of the

kitchen, and then came back to ask her guest to go in the bed-room and rest herself until supper-time.

No, Sallie could not think of resting until she had seen Reuben. In a moment more, Josh returned to say that she had better go up stairs. The sick man would not know her, he thought, and it would be better for all hands, as he expressed it, that Sallie should take the bother of nursing him at once.

"Let the gal rest a minute, can't you?" interposed Mrs. Parker, speaking for the first time.

But her husband did not appear to hear the suggestion, and motioned to Sallie to follow him.

In a small untidy apartment whose slanting roof made even Sallie stoop as she entered, and on a bed whose coverlet appeared sadly unfamiliar with the virtues of soap and water, lay the young man for whose sake this loving sister had made her long journey. She looked at the sallow face, changed as much by need of washing and shaving as by the fever, and gave a start back. "What if it is not Reuben, after all?" was the sudden thought that almost made her heart stop beating. The second look assured

her that it really was he, in spite of dirt, moustache, and pallor.

"Oh, Reuben!" Sallie knelt beside the bed as she spoke, and kissed her brother's face. There was no kiss given in return, no look of recognition, for the poor fellow was, as Josh had written, out of his mind most of the time.

There is no need to dwell on the days and nights of anxious watching that followed, the faithful nursing given by this affectionate sister to the poor brother; no need, either, to recount the discomfort Sallie endured in the ill-ordered household of Josh Parker, where there was never even a clean bowl to put gruel in, to say nothing of a clean napkin to cover the tray on which Reuben's meals were taken up. Although accustomed to poverty all her life, there were certain dainty ways of doing things for company or sick members of the family which Mrs. Boker had taught her daughter to consider essential; and she remembered that when Charlie had the measles, and Katy was kept in bed with scarlet fever, no pains had been considered too great to cook the "something nice" which should tempt the sick child's appetite, and to serve it in the most attractive manner. It was

well for Reuben that she was there to care for him. This was the thought which consoled Sallie in many an hour of home-sickness.

The doubt as to whether Reuben would get well or die was at last settled. His strong constitution triumphed over disease; consciousness returned; and though he lay a long time helpless as a child, and as fretful too, he made steady advances toward health.

What a comfort it was to the patient young nurse when, one day as she sat by the bed darning her brother's long-neglected socks, he put out his thin hand and caught hers in its feeble grasp, saying,

"Dear, good little sister, I believe your coming has saved my life."

As soon as she thought it prudent Sallie handed him the note which had been left in her lap on the cars.

"Read it to me," said the sick man, who had not yet interest enough in anything to be the least excited by curiosity.

The note ran thus :

"The enclosed twenty dollars will help pay your doctor's bill. It is sent, not out of regard for you, because I have none, but for the sake of your little sister, who has kindness of

heart enough to do a favour to a crusty old man, and common sense enough not to take offence at his plain words."

Sallie felt self-condemned as she remembered her anger at the old gentleman's speech about Reuben. Surely he would never have complimented her so highly, nor have sent her brother all this money, just for her sake, if he had known the thoughts with which she had turned her face away from him, after he said that Reuben was a thriftless ne'er-do-well. Her search for the spectacles did not recur to her thoughts, nor did she understand that it was this barley loaf of kindness to a stranger which had been accepted and multiplied, so that her own brother was the first to be fed by its distribution.

Twenty dollars, said Reuben, was a very good thing for him just then; but, after all, it was a mere drop in the bucket. He had the doctor's bill to pay, of course—it was well old Mark Mallory had thought of that—but he had besides about three months' board to pay for, and— Well, he couldn't say just what, but a number of other expenses to meet; and where the money was to come from he didn't know.

"But surely, brother, you don't mean—" and there Sally stopped. She was going to say, "You don't mean that you have spent all your earnings, when poor father has given his entire savings to send me here to take care of you?"

"I don't mean what?" the invalid asked, a shade of displeasure crossing his face.

"There! don't talk any more," said Sallie, abruptly. "I ought to have given you your medicine ten minutes ago. Take it now, and try to go to sleep, do; I have been letting you talk too much."

Setting aside everything but her duty as nurse, she proceeded to administer the dose, then shook up the pillows, darkened the one window, and went out, that Reuben might have opportunity for obeying her orders.

In such intervals as these frequent day-time naps afforded her Sallie was in the habit of seeking Nancy and helping her through with whatever work she might have on hand. Occasionally the two girls found time to go out together for a walk. The fresh air and the society of one so near her own age did Sallie good. To be sure, Nancy and she had little in common, for this Western girl had grown up

as free from responsibility or restraint as any of the flowers growing wild on the prairie, while Sallie, who had ever since she could remember fulfilled the duties of an eldest daughter in a large family, appeared almost like a middle-aged woman. Nancy helped her mother simply because she had to, and the moment she could escape she was off out of sight lest she should be called upon to do something else.

Sallie endeavoured to find some bond of union such as existed between herself and Hatty Halsey in regard to the chapters of the Bible they oftenest read, the hymns they loved best, the library books they most enjoyed. But Nancy always grew bewildered when such topics were brought forward. She could read by dint of frequent pauses to spell and by skipping the hard words; she did not care much about the Bible except the stories of Jonah, of Daniel in the lions' den, and one or two others. Indeed, her memory of these was very vague; it was several years before that a colporteur had been in that region, had stayed over-night at their house, and had left a small Bible as a present, when her father refused to buy. She had, with her mother's help, read,

or "picked out," as she called it, these stories, but the Bible had got torn up; she guessed that "Dad" must have used its leaves to light his pipe. Of hymns Nancy was entirely ignorant, and a Sunday-school she had never heard of.

Sally was shocked; she supposed every child grew up as familiar with these things as she was herself, except, indeed, the poor heathen across the seas about whom she had heard at missionary meetings, and for whose benefit she saved her occasional pennies. A heathen meant, she thought, one who knew nothing of God, our heavenly Father, nor of Christ's death upon the cross for our salvation, but worshipped idols of wood and stone. Nancy Parker had no idols, to be sure, but it gradually became Sallie's conviction that she was an out-and-out heathen. As such she prayed for her night after night, and as soon as their acquaintance was so far advanced that she dared she took every opportunity of telling Nancy little bits out of the Gospels about Jesus. It was discouraging to see how little interest her companion took in these things, but Sallie felt that she ought to try; at least her prayers would do good, she was sure.

Reuben Boker regained his strength slowly, but still so surely that it soon became evident to his sister that she was no longer really necessary to him, and ought therefore to be going home. She watched for a chance to talk with him about it. Chances enough there were, to be sure, if that meant only times when they were alone together and secure from interruption; but Reuben in his convalescence was fretful and moody. To be spoken to on a disagreeable subject was sure to bring on headache, so Sallie had to be very careful. She felt worried and anxious, too, ever since the day when he had admitted that he was so much in debt. She did not know and dared not ask about his work—whether he could go right on as before his illness or must seek new employment. Poor girl! she had always before had “mother” near to counsel her in little perplexities. Here was one greater than she had had to contend with during her sixteen years of life, and “mother” hundreds of miles away.

She was taken by surprise one morning by Reuben’s beginning a conversation with her himself. He could now sit up some hours at a time in a ricketty arm-chair which a neighbour had loaned him. Sallie had placed his

breakfast on a chair beside him, and was busy arranging the room for the day, when he said, in a pleasanter tone than was common :

“Come here, little Sal ; while I am drinking my coffee I want you to give me your advice. You are a real sensible girl, and I know I can trust you.”

Sallie's face flushed with pleasure ; and when she stood before her brother at his bidding, she was, if not handsome, something better, for her good, true heart was lighting up eyes, brow, and cheeks in a way that glorified their plainness for the moment. Only for the moment, however, for Reuben's next words brought a shadow of care, and that dispelled the glory.

“I have been thinking,” said he, “that I am almost well again, and must soon go to work. That's all very well, if it wasn't for the debts. I can't get ahead, you see, Sallie ; I'm bound hand and foot by these old debts. It's discouraging to start so, especially when a man feels as weak and shaky as I do. You'll likely be going home as soon as I get on my feet, and then—I don't know—I shall break down altogether.”

These words and the manner in which they were uttered touched Sallie's sympathy ; that

was just what they were intended to do. She drew Reuben's head to a resting-place on her shoulder, and stroked his hair with that peculiar pitifulness which a strong-hearted woman feels toward a man who is weak either in body or in character. Reuben was weak in both, and Sallie at that moment, though unconsciously, began to understand that he was so. The words of her travelling companion recurred to her mind. She resented them more than when they were spoken, and almost wished the old gentleman had kept his money and his compliments. This resentment grew out of her new fear that they were true. "Was Reuben," she asked herself, "as manly a man as her father's son ought to be?" But the next minute she reproached herself for the doubt.

"Reuben," she said, still stroking his hair, "how I wish there was some way in which I could help you! I know things will be hard for you just at first."

"Some way in which you could help me!" he repeated. "There is a very plain way for you to do that, but I must not speak of it; I have no right to expect such a piece of self-denial."

This older brother knew just how to gain his

point with Sallie. He knew well enough that if there was any one beauty in Sallie's character it was the grace of utter disregard of self where another's happiness was concerned.

"You must speak, Reuben," she said; "I cannot answer until you tell me what it is that I can do."

"Well, then, Sallie dear, it is this;" and Reuben raised his eyes to hers very coaxingly. "You have money enough left to pay your expenses home—perhaps a little more."

Sallie nodded.

"Suppose, now, you were to conclude to make your home with me for a few months. I could rent two or three rooms, and you keep house for both of us. It would save half what I have to pay for board. You could get up a small school, I should think, or take in plain sewing enough to make out a living, and in the mean time let me have the use of that money—to wipe out old scores, you know. I could soon pay you back, and then you could do as you pleased about going or staying."

Reuben looked in her face for an answer. She had none ready. She put his head very gently back on the pillows, then said:

"Let me have time to think of what you

have just proposed. I will give you an answer after dinner."

The subject was dropped ; and when, after a while, Mrs. Parker came up, as she often did now, to have a chat with the invalid, Sallie slipped away unobserved, and ran quickly out of the back door to escape the eyes of Nancy, and did not pause until she had reached a quiet, pretty spot beside the creek at the foot of Josh Parker's so-called garden. There, with the soothing murmur of the water in her ears, the tranquil sky above, and the bright, flower-dotted grass stretching as far as her eye could reach, she sat and questioned herself as to what was her duty. What would father and mother say to her remaining indefinitely with Reuben? They had given her up willingly when he needed her most ; but now that he was able to do without her, ought she not to return without delay to relieve the over-full hands of her hard-working mother? But then the other side had its argument too. If Reuben needed this money as badly as he said, was it not a sister's place to remain, and not only let him have the use of it, but work to earn more? Oh that mother were beside her to answer that question !

Sallie remembered the advice of St. James: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." She had often followed that advice, and it had never failed her; so she knelt down among the grass and asked to be shown the right thing for her to do. Then, comforted and hopeful, she went back to the house.

At the door was Josh Parker; and when he saw her coming, he held up something in his hand. Sallie's heart gave a bound; it was a letter from home; that must be the way in which God would direct her. She glanced at it; the address was in her father's cramped hand-writing. Yes, this would indicate the path of duty. Josh handed her another letter, a business-looking epistle in a yellow envelope, with Reuben's name in bold, regular characters upon it.

Sallie could not make up her mind to go to him with this until she had made herself acquainted with the home-news, so important now in its bearing upon her future; so she sat down in the dull front room into which she had been so unceremoniously introduced by her guide on the day of her arrival, and studied out her letter. It began, as usual, with a hope that Reuben was improving, but the next sen-

tence, instead of being the stereotyped "All at home continue to be blest with health," was: "I grieve to tell you that mother had a fall down the cellar steps yesterday; her right arm and shoulder are badly hurt; it's hard times for me and the children with mother laid up and you away."

"Oh, I must go home—I must, I must!" Sallie repeated to herself. The picture of home with a disabled mother and six dear little uncared-for brothers and sisters came up before the girl's mind, and it would have taken a good deal of Reuben's artful persuasiveness at that moment to have induced her to remain West with him. She resolved to go up stairs and give him his letter, and then tell him the home-news and her decision. Of course, she reasoned, he will see as clearly as I that it is my duty to go.

Reuben tore open the yellow envelope, read his letter, read it again; it seemed as if he never would take his eyes off that sheet of paper. At last he turned to Sallie with an expression of more animation in his face than had been there for months.

"Read that," he said. "I won't call upon you, child, for that piece of self-denial that

made you draw such a long breath this morning. There's good luck in store for me, after all. Read it out; my eyes are so weak that I can hardly make out all the words."

Sallie read. It was a letter from a man who had formerly lived East and with whom the Boker family were well acquainted. He had established himself in business in a thriving town about fifty miles distant from C——, and now wrote to young Boker offering him a situation with a large salary, and held out as an inducement a probable future partnership in the firm.

"My fortune's made! I'm off to —— next week," shouted Reuben, or at least he attempted to shout, but had to give up for very weakness.

The way was certainly plain before Sallie, and she had now nothing to do but to see that Reuben's clothing was in good repair, give him a day or two more of affectionate attention, and then start on her homeward journey.

When Nancy learned that her new friend was about to leave her, she cried bitterly, and would not be consoled. The last evening of Sallie's stay the two girls took a farewell walk together. On the way Sallie spoke to Nancy more tenderly than ever before about the love

of Jesus and her desire that she should accept it and be made happy by it.

"If I had more learning, I think I could explain things to you, Nancy, so that you could not help going right to Jesus and asking him to forgive you and teach you how to be good."

"I don't know about learning, Sallie; I think that would just stand in my way," said Nancy; "but as to coming to Jesus, I have about made up my mind to do that. I'm going to ask you to give me your Bible for a present. You can get another easy when you get home."

Sallie put her arms around Nancy and kissed her:

"I'm so glad—oh, so glad, Nancy! Indeed, you shall have my Bible; I thought of giving it to you, but I was not sure that you would care about it."

"Well," said Nancy, "I suppose if you'd offered it to me the first day you came I'd have laughed in your face; but now that I've seen what sort of folks religion makes, I'm bound to get it too. Marm and I have talked about you more than once, and marm says if it's religion that makes Sally Boker so cheerful and patient and kind every day of her life she would like to see all of us getting religion."

Sallie listened to this long speech, feeling so glad, so humble, so surprised, so thankful, all at once that she did not know how to answer. How God had honoured her! She had not done anything worth speaking of, and yet God had been so gracious as to use her as a means of teaching this ignorant girl something of the beauty of holiness.

Sally Boker returned to her home. She took up once more her daily round of sweeping and patching, of paring potatoes, washing dirty faces, and tying shoe-strings. The few people who know her consider her as simply a good-natured, common-place, homely woman. Few think of praising her—least of all does she consider herself worthy of praise. Yet many a barley loaf has she brought to the Saviour for his blessing—ay, and he blessed them, and multiplied them to the feeding of more souls than we can count on this side of eternity.

Her history is very simple and uneventful. I have called it "Sallie Boker's One Talent." Need I at the close tell you what that talent was? If the influence of her cheerful, loving, self-denying spirit has fallen upon you in any measure while reading about her, thank God, and go do likewise.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS DEBBY CRUMP AND HER FRIENDS.

THE great flakes of an old-fashioned snow-storm were descending upon the village of Hallicasset. The bare branches of the trees had a delicate tracery of white on top of each, as exactly drawn as if an artist had taken the trouble to sketch their forms in chalk; the sides of certain brown houses began to look like enormous slices of heavily-frosted fruit-cake; and even the unfortunate cows who had wandered some distance from their shelter wore dainty shawls upon their backs that they would gladly have shaken off had they been able. Every unsightly stump and stone, every dingy fence, was receiving a coat of white paint, far more beautiful than any with which the good house-keepers of Hallicasset sought to improve their dwellings at the spring cleaning-times. Very few travellers were abroad, but those that were appeared clad in overalls such as no

tailor on earth could equal—seamless robes that had needed no sewing-machine to add to their completeness.

In the door-way of a large and very comfortable house stood a very uncomfortable old lady ; yes, there is no better word in all the dictionary by which to describe Miss Debby Crump than this. From the little bow of ribbon that fluttered on top of her unbecoming cap, down to the large carpet-shoes which covered her corn-tormented toes, she was a bundle of discomfort. Her sharp gray eyes were constantly peering about in search of something to find fault with ; her thin lips were admirably adapted for scolding. Her back was bent from long acquaintance with rheumatism, and her skinny hands had, ever and anon, a peculiar motion, particularly when a child came in sight, as if she were applying a switch to some invisible culprit.

Miss Debby Crump had once been the school-mistress of Hallicasset. Her reign had expired before the present generation of students had put aside the long dresses of babyhood, and a flourishing academy now took the place of the small, dingy school-house where she had held sway for nearly twenty years. It was the

fathers and mothers of the present academy pupils who best knew Miss Crump, but for all that many a little boy or timid girl would take a longer walk to and from school, rather than pass her door at the risk of encountering one of her ugly frowns.

Fortunately, no such boy or girl was passing along the road when Miss Debby opened the door, for a scowl deeper than usual had settled itself in the wrinkles between her eyes. She looked up and down the road, but it was not to admire the white roofs of her neighbours nor the beauty of the trees in their new adornment; she did not waste her time looking at such things as these. A man or boy who would consent to do an errand for her in the village was the object for which the gray eyes searched the road on either side; but no one appeared. The storm had brought on an attack of rheumatism, and not a drop of her favourite liniment was in the house. It was impossible for her to venture out, and not a person had she to send for more. She looked until she grew tired and cold, now up the road, now down, giving a special glance of indignation at the smooth expanse of snow that had dared to intrude itself upon her garden-walks, her very

doorstep ; then, with a shiver that sent a flutter to the bow on her cap, she closed the door and went in.

The large bay-window of the sitting-room was Miss Debby's favourite point of observation for winter afternoons. There stood her little work-table, with her basket of knitting, and beside it her low cushioned chair. There she could sit at her work, and see, with half a glance, everything that took place on the street. If the house had been constructed with a view to affording its present occupant every facility for finding out the affairs of other people, it could not have been more successfully accomplished. The building had, however, been erected by a former generation of Crumps ; and unless curiosity had been a family failing dating back to that time, this convenience was purely accidental. I have spoken of Miss Debby as a school-teacher of twenty years' standing, and also as a woman of property. The two do not commonly go together, especially in a village like Hallicaset, where teaching is not apt to be a very profitable employment. The Crumps had been, as far back as any one could remember, a prosperous family ; they had lived in as good style

as any one in the place, and had always been looked up to as people that might spend and give away twice what they did, if it had pleased them so to do.

Miss Debby was an only child, and why, as soon as she had grown to young-ladyhood, she had seen fit to take charge of the village school nobody could imagine, unless it was just for the sake of being contrary. She was not, even in her youth, a favourite with children; and when at the close of her twenty years' service she resigned her position, there was great rejoicing among her pupils. After that she shut herself in the solitude of her big house, and seldom was seen beyond her garden-gate, except on Sundays and when there was something important to be found out that was not visible from her own bay-window.

That stormy afternoon Miss Debby sat alone, knitting and scowling, until the twilight fell; then she put her work away and went to the kitchen to put on the tea-kettle and get her solitary meal. No servant had she, not even a little maid to perform such an office as that for her. It was not that Miss Debby liked house-work; she did not, for handling of brooms and brushes did not agree with the rheumatism

in her back. It was not that she enjoyed living alone; on the contrary, she thought it far more pleasant to have at least one person near whom she could scold to her heart's content. It was not that she was stingy and grudged the money she would have to pay as wages. The only reason why Miss Debby did not keep a girl was that no girl would stay with her. She had hired one after another; there was no telling how many she had hired, but strange to say, not one had ever remained in her kitchen beyond the first week or two. It was never easy, in Hallicasset, to procure help, and it proved impossible to find a girl who would do Miss Crump's work under the inspection of her keen eyes and the continual clatter of her tongue. At last, giving up the fruitless effort to secure steady help, this poor rich woman had to resign herself to the necessity of doing her own work. Even the neighbourly aids which other people received, of a helping hand on ironing days or a portion of some extra nice dish, never fell to her lot; nobody dared run the risk of braving Miss Crump's chronic ill-temper.

No wonder that she disapproved of the snow that lay piled on her steps; there was no one

to shovel it off; her back ached, and there was no one to go for the liniment.

It happened that about five minutes after Miss Debby had closed the street door three boys passed along on their way from school. These were too big and valiant to go a roundabout way for fear of anybody's frown. They were just the boys Miss Debby would have hailed as suitable messengers for her liniment, but they passed the house entirely unconscious that their services were required. These were Ralph and Nat Kennedy and Tom Sinclair, whose two homes were near together, and but a short distance beyond the Crump House, as it was called.

Nat turned his head as he went by, and remarked to his companions that the old lady was a getting a pretty good share of the snow inside her gate.

"Poor Miss Debby!" said Tom Sinclair. "I wonder how she does manage to live there all by herself? Just fancy, boys, the old body coming out to shovel a path here. It's too bad!"

"Yes, it's too bad," was Ralph's ready assent; "but when you think what a scold she is, it's no wonder she can never get anybody to

do her a good turn. But I'm sorry for her, all the same."

"Sorry, but not sorry enough to do her the good turn yourself—eh, Ralph?" said Nat, laughing.

"Boys, I've got it now! I've got the very thing! Whew! but that's an excellent idea!" It was Tom who was so suddenly impressed with the new thought, whatever it was, that he stood still in the middle of the road and gave his nearest companion a forcible thump on the back by way of emphasis.

"Out with it, Tom! Ideas must be scarce with you if they make you cudgel a fellow like that. Speak quick," said Ralph, "or you may lose it."

"I'm not joking: barley loaves—that old woman."

Tom's speech was certainly very disconnected, but his meaning, whatever it was, flashed from one pair of eyes to another, and the two brothers exclaimed as with one voice, "Good for you, Tom! Capital idea!"

"Fact is," said Tom, thus encouraged, "that thing has been running in my head ever since Sunday."

"In mine too," chimed in Nat.

"I felt as if I ought to be ashamed, a big chap like me, going on as I do—no use to anybody living ; but, turn and twist the matter as I would, I could not think of a single barley loaf to offer. It won't be much anyhow, but then—"

"You haven't told us a word yet," said Ralph, "what it is you mean to do, and here we are at home."

"Let's go in your kitchen, then, boys," suggested Tom, "and we'll talk it over while we get warm."

"No, that won't do," said Ralph. "It's one of mother's busy days, and she won't care about having us around the fire, right in her way."

"Well, come into our house, then ; my mother said she would be out all the afternoon ; there is nobody at home but Aunt Sue, and she will be up stairs at her sewing."

When, a few minutes later, the three boys were seated, with their benumbed hands all spread out before the cheery blaze of Mrs. Sinclair's kitchen-fire, Tom's "excellent idea" found expression in words.

"We all want a barley loaf." Tom announced this as a fact, but at the same time he

looked inquiringly into the faces of the other boys.

"Of course we do," assented they.

"I've found one," said Tom.

"For yourself, or for all of us?" asked Nat.

"For all of us."

"And what is it to be?" was the eager question.

"Miss Debby Crump."

"Pshaw, Tom! What's the use of fooling us that way? Miss Debby Crump, indeed!" Ralph's tone was one of indignation.

"A pretty tough loaf, any way," said Nat.

"Why, Tom Sinclair, you don't understand what the teacher meant about our bringing barley loaves to Christ. It was that we should do some kind thing or other to somebody that needed it. That would be just like bringing bread to the Saviour; and if we did it in the right way, he would take it from us and bless it, and maybe make a great deal of good come out of a little thing." This was Ralph's explanation.

"Just so," said the other.

"But, Tom—"

"Well?" responded Tom, who sat with his chin in his hands, and his eyes fixed on the

blaze with an expression of pleasant resolution in them.

"Miss Debby is not a poor woman for us to help. She has more money— Oh my! if I only had the money she has, wouldn't I—?" Ralph gave a cluck and shook his fist at the fire; he did not finish his sentence, so nobody knows to this day what he might have done had he been in possession of Miss Debby's fortune. The very idea of its grand possibilities appeared to overcome him.

"No," said Tom, bringing out his words slowly, "she is not a poor woman—that's true, boys—but she's a good deal poorer than many a poor woman. Think of her there all alone, sick half the time, and no one to even bring in a scuttle of coal for her, to shovel off the snow, to do her errands or anything else. If she ain't poor, who is?"

"But it's her own fault," said Ralph.

"Yes, it's her own fault, but that don't make it any easier, I guess."

"I tell you what, boys," added Tom, after a long gaze into the fire to collect his thoughts into one grand proposition—"I tell you what. I'm sorry for old Miss Debby, cantankerous as she is. If you two will go shares with me in

doing what we can to make her happier, good ! if not, I mean to do something myself."

"I will," agreed Nat at once.

"What, for instance, will you do?" questioned Ralph.

Tom had left his seat and was taking long strides up and down the kitchen floor, all absorbed in his new plans. He turned about at Ralph's words and replied : "I'll get up an hour earlier and go chop wood for her every morning—enough to last her all day."

"I'll undertake to keep her front steps clean, and a good path from the door to the road, all winter," was Nat's ready response.

Ralph laughed heartily : "The old vixen'll box your ears soundly for your pains. I wouldn't be the fellow that she caught at her wood-pile; she would be certain you went there to steal, and would have you in the lock-up within an hour."

Tom seemed to have prepared his mind to meet every objection, and to this he answered, "I think, boys, we'll have to manage it on the sly. What do you say to dividing the labours, and doing everything quietly before she is up in the morning?"

Ralph's eyes twinkled. He saw a prospect

of fun in the undertaking, and gave his full consent to take a share in making Miss Crump comfortable.

"Nobody's to know a thing about it," said Tom.

"Of course not," agreed Nat. "We don't want to show off our barley loaves, as the Pharisees did their prayers."

"Mum's the word," said Tom.

"Ay!" came readily from both his partners in the undertaking.

Mrs. Sinclair reached home before the matter was quite arranged, and "shooed" the boys out of her way as if they had been so many cats or chickens. In a retired corner of the hall they whispered their plans as to the division of labour. Nat's work for the winter was to shovel a path from the front door to the road, and another from the back door to the wood-shed, every time it was necessary. Tom was to keep to his promise of chopping wood and cutting kindlings each morning, enough for the day's use. Ralph was to stop every evening at the post-office for Miss Debby's mail, and to watch his opportunities of slipping it under the door.

The great charm of the undertaking was the

secrecy with which it was to be carried on. It was good-hearted Tom Sinclair who really owned the barley loaf, since Nat entered into it more from sympathy with his friend than anything else, and Ralph was intent on having some fun out of it.

Miss Debby crept out of bed the next morning feeling very stiff and sore, on account of the recent storm and for want of the liniment to rub her back. Her corns ached too; and all these things did not help to make her amiable. She frowned as she put on her carpet shoes; she grunted as she adjusted the false teeth in her mouth; she snorted at her reflection in the looking-glass as she put on the ugly cap with the bow on top; and well she might, for no other mirror in all Hallicasset was doomed to the task of representing so disagreeable a countenance as this unlucky piece of glass.

The last thing she did before leaving her room was to put on her over-shoes and wrap herself in an old water-proof; for she had to go out in the snow to chop her kindlings and bring wood wherewith to make the kitchen fire. The coal had to be brought in also for her sitting-room stove, and somehow she must

manage, backache or not, to shovel a small path from the back door. It was hard to be a lone woman, with nobody to do a hand's turn to help her; so thought Miss Debby as she slowly went down stairs. It was a thought which would have brought a tear—at least a sigh—from a softer-hearted woman; but Miss Debby accompanied it with a grunt. She took her shovel and opened the kitchen door, expecting to be confronted by a pretty high wall of snow.

“Goodness me!” came from her lips in her utter astonishment. There was no wall of snow before her at all, but a good wide path all the way to the wood-shed. “Well I never!” observed Miss Debby to herself as she hobbled out to perform the hardest part of her morning's work. But she took only one step beyond the door. There, on the little porch, lay a nice pile of kindlings, and another pile of dry wood, all ready for her use. “What under the canopy does this mean?” She must have made the inquiry of the trees and fences, for she peered out in every direction, but her sharp eyes discovered nothing to which to address her question but these inanimate objects. Of course they did not answer her; so Miss

Debby uttered a "Humph!" took up an armful of kindlings, and went in to the now easy task of making a fire. The next thing was to cook her breakfast. That did not take long.

A cup of weak tea, a slice of buttered toast, and a mutton-chop warmed over from yesterday's dinner, sufficed for her morning appetite. This time it was a trifle sharpened by curiosity, and she did full justice to both toast and chop. There was the one cup, saucer, and plate to wash; and after that Miss Debby stepped to the front door, as was her custom, to look up and down the street, and find out, if possible, what was the news of the day in Hallicasset. Very wide indeed the keen eyes opened, and they peered along the road with unusual eagerness; but all to no purpose. The person who was playing this practical joke upon her had not lingered to hear what she had to say about it. The steps were clean, the path was carefully made, and at her feet—"Why, did I ever?" exclaimed the astonished woman—lay her *Weekly Religious Gazetteer* and a letter. She stooped to take them from under the corner of the mat, where they were half hidden, and could not for a moment bring her mind to the perusal of either letter or paper,

so absorbed was she in wondering who could have gone through the storm last night to get the contents of her post-office box. Other people's affairs were less interesting to her this time than her own, so she closed the door and retreated to her bay-window, to sit and wonder, while she rested her back preparatory to beginning the day's operation of sweeping, and scouring the brass fender and its accompaniments, and all the little brass knobs that ornamented the old-fashioned dwelling of the Crump family.

When she arose and went to her work, the question kept repeating itself in her mind, and when once or twice she fancied for a moment that she had the clue, the gray eyes blinked and the nervous fingers rubbed the brass knobs so briskly that they shone like miniature suns, and gave caricature reflections of Miss Crump's face. Could it be lame John Finch, her next-door neighbour? No; it was all he could do, poor fellow! to shovel a path for himself and chop his own wood. Could it be those mischievous Barnet boys across the way? Oh no; human nature must be a far better thing than - Miss Debby considered it if they, whom she had more than once driven away for standing

outside of the fence and looking at her flowers, could have such kind feeling toward her. Was it possible that some of the school-boys had done this? That was not to be imagined for a moment; for well she knew that the boys, one and all, disliked and feared her. Well, she would just hold her tongue and see what would turn up. People seldom did good deeds in this wicked world; and when they did, it was invariably to get credit for it or gain a favour. Somebody would be in during the day, no doubt, with a subscription-paper, or to borrow her gilt-edged china tea-set, or to ask for the pattern of her new cloak that she had just got from New York. "They don't draw the wool over Debby Crump's eyes that way," muttered the owner of that name. Miss Debby was very fond of talking to herself. Probably it was because so much of her life had been spent in talking—that is, when she was a teacher—and now, for want of another person to address, she had got in the way of dividing herself in two, and making one part answer back to the other. But for all her sagacity, and all the extra strength she put forth in polishing her brasses by way of brightening her wits at the same time, the whole day

passed without her gaining a clue to her unknown friend. Nobody called with a subscription-paper; nobody asked the loan of her china or her cloak pattern. Indeed, callers were rare at any time at the Crump house. The village people knew very well that such a courtesy would be set down by Miss Debby as an attempt to get into her good graces for the sake of gaining something; the good-natured and independent house-wives of Hallicasset could not stand that.

Miss Debby went to bed with a resolve to rise early next morning and be on the watch for any interloper in her wood-shed. She kept her resolution so far as to wake up at six o'clock—seven was her hour for rising in winter—but it was bitter cold, and her bones ached. At that hour comfort was more to be desired than the gratification of curiosity; so she turned over, readjusted her night-cap, and took another nap, assuring herself, in her half-wakeful state, that it was very unlikely that anybody would take the trouble to chop her wood a second time.

An hour later she rose and looked out. Oh, it was fiercely cold. The sharp end of the old lady's nose was purple, to match the brisk lit-

tle how on her cap. This time she thought, as she again wrapped her water-proof around her, in view of the cheerless work of going to the wood-shed for her fuel, how pleasant it would be to have somebody to do that work for her always. In most places there would have been some poor person who would gladly have undertaken the daily task for a small money compensation ; but as I have hinted, Hallicasset was a substantial and independent place, where every one could afford to live without doing any "chores" but his own.

Miss Debby had put on her water-proof in vain. She opened the back door to find a neat pile of kindlings, as before, and another pile of wood. This time a box-ful of coal was also placed within reach. "It does beat all, now don't it?" was the question one part of Miss Debby put to the other ; and the answer came, "It does that."

It was too cold to stop there and consider the matter, so she hastened to start her fire and get ready her breakfast. When the meal was eaten and the few dishes washed, she went to look out at the front door. Miss Debby was an exceedingly methodical person, and the movements of the hands on her good eight-day clock were not

more regular than she in her long-established habits. Had there been a failure one morning in the year of the punctual swinging on its hinges of the Crump house door, the good-hearted neighbours would have left their work to hurry in with offers of sympathy and aid; for it would have been a matter of certainty that Miss Debby was ill.

There was the clean path; there were a couple of letters tucked under the mat, as yesterday's mail had been; and with them was a slip of paper on which was written, "If Miss Crump will kindly write a list of the errands she would like done for her, and leave it under the mat to-night, those errands shall be faithfully performed by a FRIEND."

Curiosity so sharpened the gray eyes and the long nose at that moment that there was danger of the paper being pricked all over. "I never, in all my days!" said Miss Debby to herself; and the self made answer, "This does beat all!" Sitting in the bay-window, she studied the simple words of the unknown "Friend." The handwriting told no tales. It was large and bold, but very crooked, and the "faithfully" was spelled with a single *l*. A school-boy or a man of imperfect education—and there

were many such in Hallicasset—might, with equal likelihood, have written that sentence.

“Well, there’s something behind all this sudden goodness,” said the far-sighted Miss Debby. “Nobody is chopping my wood and doing my errands for nothing. I won’t say a word, and I won’t watch either, for that might frighten the ‘Friend’ away. It’s very convenient to have such useful friendship, and I’ll keep it as long as I can. I’ll have to pay for it, some way or other, soon enough.”

This sour old woman talked thus to herself. She was so sure that she understood human nature; and so she did—her own kind of human nature, that had its source, life, and end only in self. She did not in any wise understand that human nature which the Son of God had, in his own person, dignified and illumined, so that all his followers might take pattern thereby. She had no idea that such human nature as he had made possible was beginning to glimmer faintly in the persons of three Hallicasset boys, and that to it she owed the acceptable service of these two days.

There were several things that Miss Crump wanted from the village, but the weather and her rheumatism had both been so obstinate that

she had put off from day to day the dreaded undertaking of walking so far as the stores. With much care, therefore, she made out the following list, and placed it under the mat, as requested, before retiring for the night :

“1 lb. best Oolong tea; this from Hill & Black’s, mind,
for I won’t drink that stuff they have at Jones’s.
3 yds. calico, like pattern; also from Hill & Black’s.
1 spool Clark’s thread, No. 50; “ “ “
1 bottle of Brown’s Magic Liniment; from drug store.”

Under the list was written, “I want a bill of the articles from Hill & Black’s. Tell them I will step in and pay it the next time I pass that way. The liniment will be seventy-five cents; here it is. I am a great fool to trust you—any honest person would not be ashamed to show his face—but I’ll try this once. If you fool me, I’ll find a way to punish you.”

Miss Debby gave a snort of self-approval each time she read this over, and that was on not less than five or six occasions during the day. She thought she had succeeded in making use of the unknown snow-shoveller, wood-chopper, and postman without compromising her dignity or risking her money.

Meanwhile, the boys were enjoying their barley loaf far more than Miss Debby was. True,

she had the benefit and they the work, but there was a pleasure they had not looked for in doing good, hoping for nothing again. Even Ralph, who had undertaken his part only for the sake of fun, began to feel his heart grow more pitiful toward the lonely woman, and with that feeling came his first experience of the truth that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." When he read the crisp directions on the slip of paper that he found under the mat next morning, and the uncomplimentary words with which they concluded, he did feel a trifle vexed that his unselfish walks back and forth should bring him insult instead of gratitude. He did think Miss Crump might have the grace to say "Thank you," especially when she supposed, as no doubt she did, that all the favours of shovelling, chopping, and errand-doing were bestowed by one person. Ralph took comfort in thinking how much better off he was with his good health and good manners than Miss Crump with neither of these, but only money.

By the time the street-door opened next morning for its owner's daily look abroad, Ralph had executed her commissions. The tea, calico, thread, and liniment were all ranged

on the door-mat, with a bill from Hill & Black's slipped in the string with which the bundle of calico was tied. A grim smile of satisfaction turned up the corners of Miss Debby's mouth, which were accustomed to be drawn down. It was a pity that Ralph was not somewhere near to see and be encouraged by the smile.

So things went on that winter. The three boys kept their secret from everybody; and though they wondered a little that Miss Debby had not curiosity enough to watch for them some morning, they were certain that her silent acceptance of their services meant that she was pleased. It was hard work too, after the novelty and fun wore off, to get up so early in the cold and start off to perform the drudgery which they had often felt disposed to shirk, even at home. But they found it true, as do all of Christ's disciples, that help and courage are given for each unpleasant duty; yes, more than that, for in doing his will they received more of his spirit; they understood better the greatness of his love by the little spark caught therefrom in their own young hearts. These barley loaves of theirs were feeding the givers as much as—yes, more than—the receiver.

The winter wore on. It had been a severe

one: the weather-wise people of Hallicasset declared there had not been a season like it for thirty years. March came in like a lion, as the old saying is, but I think a great white polar bear would have been a more appropriate simile for that place and time. The snow lay in great drifts over everything. Fences were covered up, and all the usual landmarks hidden. The roads were quite impassable for several days, and the newspapers told of trains being stopped in all directions. There were two days on which Tom Sinclair and his two friends could not get to school, and one of them was so stormy that the self-imposed morning tasks at the Crump house were neglected. The second day, however, they all took an early start, fearing that poor Miss Debby had suffered through their neglect. When they came to the house, Nat exclaimed,

“Why, there’s the snow piled up to the door as smooth as a sheet of paper. The old lady’s been well snowed-in this time.”

So she had; there was not a footprint between the road and her door. The neighbours across the way had noticed that Miss Debby’s regular morning observations had been neglected on the previous day, but they did not

wonder that even her curiosity was a trifle chilled by such weather.

Nat went to work with a good will at the huge wall of snow before him.

“No use for me to look for any commissions under that mat,” said Ralph, pointing to the smooth surface of the door-step, where no one could tell whether a mat was hidden or not.

“No indeed, unless you expect some signed and sealed by Jack Frost himself,” said Tom Sinclair. “I don’t see how I am ever to reach the wood-shed, unless you come and dig a tunnel for me, Nat.” Tom made one or two ineffectual plunges as he spoke, and thereby found that he must go home and get his own shovel and work with Nat if he would get his wood chopped in any sort of season. When at last he did get round to the back of the house, what was his surprise at finding the provision of wood and kindlings placed at the back door two days previous yet untouched! A light covering of snow only was on it, because of its sheltered position, but from the undisturbed mass that lay all along the porch it was evident that the door had not been opened during the storm.

Tom’s first thought was that Miss Debby

had gone off on a visit ; but his second followed quickly, to the effect that it was very unlikely she had started off during the storm, and he knew she was at home the day before it came on. Perhaps she was ill, unable to leave her bed. Tom knew not just what to do ; it seemed sad to have the poor lady shut up in the house, with no one to attend to her wants. He made his way round to the front gate, and expressed his fears to Nat.

"Yes," said Nat, "it does look as if something was wrong. What shall we do?"

"I'll run home and ask my mother to step in and see. That will be best," was Tom's suggestion.

"No, no, don't do that," said Nat. "Your mother will ask how you happened to know anything about it, and that will let the cat out of the bag, you see."

"It won't either," said Tom. "I'll tell her that we boys were passing, and noticed that there were no footprints inside of her gate. That will do ; mother won't ask questions."

But mother did ask questions. When Tom burst into the kitchen, panting with his exertions to hasten through the snow, she asked first, "Why, Tom, where in the world have

you been?" to which Tom replied, as he had determined, that he and the other boys had been up as far as the Crump house; that it was all shut up there—no path, no footprints—and that they feared from these signs that Miss Debby must be ill; and that was what had made him run so. Couldn't his mother just step along and see?

Mrs. Sinclair was busy getting breakfast. She was just turning a cake on the griddle when Tom began his careful speech. At its close she put down her cake-turner, placed her arms akimbo, and stood a moment silently looking at him; and then burst into a hearty laugh.

"What's the matter, mother?"

"Why, Tom Sinclair, I believe you're losing your wits! Here it's only a quarter to seven by the clock, and you come telling me that Miss Debby Crump must be ill because the house is shut up and no path made. Miss Debby is a late riser; what has she to make her get up at this time of day? No doubt she is in the midst of a good nap, while you are worrying about her being sick. Well! well!" Mrs. Sinclair turned again to her griddle.

"But, mother," continued Tom, "the snow

before the door looks as if it had not been trodden on since the storm began."

"Very like," replied Mrs. Sinclair, coolly, and not turning from her griddle this time. "There's no call for her to go out in such weather; and Miss Debby's not one to have many visitors. But what concern is it of yours, Tom? I can't make out what has started you up so about old Miss Debby."

Had Mrs. Sinclair turned around as she spoke, she might have seen that Tom blushed and looked somewhat disconcerted; but all he said was, "I do wish you'd go and see her, mother."

"I would, Tom, in a minute, if I thought she was ill, but I see no reason for thinking so."

Tom stood tying knots in the fringe of his scarf, hardly knowing what to say next. He was very anxious that his mother should go.

"Well, mother," he went on after a pause, "if you don't think it means anything about the house being shut up, and no path, what do you say to Miss Debby's not having had any fire these two days?"

"Miss Debby's not having had any fire?" Mrs. Sinclair looked around this time in surprise. "Why, Tom, what do you mean?"

"Just that. I know she has had no fire yesterday nor the day before."

"How do you know? Tom Sinclair, you're as bad as Miss Debby herself for prying into other folks' affairs. What business had you, any way, prowling about the Crump house this hour in the morning? and how do you happen to know whether there's been a fire there or not? Shame on you, Tom!"

There was no help for it: Tom had either to let his neighbour suffer, as he was convinced she was suffering, or let the cat out of the bag, as Nat Kennedy had predicted. He thought it best to own up.

"You dear fellow!" his mother exclaimed when he came to the end of his story; and she emphasized her words with an affectionate kiss—"you dear fellow! and that's the way you came to know so much about Miss Debby's affairs. Well, I must own I never would have given you and the Kennedy boys credit for such real kindness of heart. I shall always think more of you for this. Sit down there, Tom;" and she motioned him to a seat at the table. "Father and Aunt Sue aren't ready yet—it isn't quite seven—but you sit down and eat your breakfast. The cakes are un-

common nice this morning, and I'll pour out your coffee directly."

"But you'll go in and see Miss Debby?"

"Yes, I'll go just the minute breakfast is over. You eat, and don't worry any more. Miss Debby sha'n't suffer, if I can do anything to help her."

"And you'll keep our secret for us, mother?"

"Yes, I'll try to, although I think it's 'most too good to keep."

"I don't know what Ralph and Nat will say to me for telling," said Tom, feeling, now that the anxiety was removed, all the disgrace of a telltale.

"Never you mind, my boy ; you did just the right thing."

According to her promise, and without saying a word to the rest of the family that would betray Tom, Mrs. Sinclair put on her snowshoes as soon as the morning meal was ended, bundled herself up well in shawl and furs, and set out for the Crump house. The path was neatly cleared by this time—she understood now how that came about—but the windows were all closed, and there was no sign of life about the place. She went first to the front door and rang the bell ; she waited, but there

was no response. Then she walked around to the back. There lay the pile of wood ; there stood the box of coal, and evidently they had not been touched. She knocked two or three times at this door, but with no success ; she tried the latch ; it yielded to her hand, and she walked in. The kitchen was empty ; it seemed as if there had not been fire in the stove for a long time. She now began to feel the same alarm that had seized Tom, and without standing on ceremony, as she usually did on entering the dignified mansion, she ran up stairs and knocked at the first door she came to. A groan from within was the only answer. Tom's fears were true, after all. There on the bed lay poor Miss Debby, half dressed, and with her old water-proof thrown on a chair at her side. She had some fever, and was evidently suffering great pain. Mrs. Sinclair drew from her little by little an account of things. It appeared that two mornings before she had risen as usual, but while dressing was seized with severe pain in her back. She had rubbed it with liniment, but it had no effect. Then, Miss Debby said, she had tried "camphire"—she was a great believer in the virtues of "camphire"—and she felt a trifle easier. So

she completed her toilet, and managed to get down stairs; but just as she unfastened the back door to go out for her fuel the pain had come on again, and she had hobbled up stairs and got into bed the best way she could.

"And you have been here ever since?" asked Mrs. Sinclair, much shocked.

"Of course I have," said the sick woman.

"And has no one been in to see you all this time?"

"Nobody. How did you get in, I want to know?"

"Through the back door, Miss Debby. You must have forgotten to fasten it again when that pain seized you."

"I never was one to thank company for walking through my kitchen," snapped Miss Debby; "but now I'm laid up here I suppose folks will take advantage."

Mrs. Sinclair was quite taken aback by this speech, and had no answer ready.

"Now you are here," said the sick woman, "you might as well be doing something for me. This pain is very bad."

"What do you think of a mustard plaster? I have great faith in mustard," suggested Mrs. Sinclair.

"Mustard? humph! I don't want any of your mustard plasters on me."

"Would it ease you if I should rub your back for you?" Mrs. Sinclair inquired, meekly.

"Rub my back?" shrieked the sufferer, hoarsely. "You'd better not try it."

"What would you like me to do, Miss Debby?"

"I want to see the doctor. I feel as if I was in for an attack of inflammatory rheumatism, and there's no time to be lost. Have you got anybody at your house to send?"

"My Tom will go. If you don't need anything right away, I'll go home and send him. I believe Dr. Kidd is your physician?"

"Dr. Kidd!" screamed Miss Debby, in a passion. "Why, woman, the very sight of him would kill me! No, tell the boy to go for old Dr. Price."

Mrs. Sinclair was glad of anything that gave her a reason for leaving the sick woman for a few minutes. She told her that she would be back directly, and hurried off. Tom accepted the commission to call the doctor as part of his regular duty. Miss Debby was in some sort his special charge, and he felt himself responsible for her well-being. A mile's walk through

the snow was not a very enjoyable thing, and Tom knew very well that he would get no thanks for his trouble. That mattered not; it was his barley loaf; he was to offer it to Christ, and not to Miss Debby; and he had begun to hope that when that grand prophecy in the gospel should become reality he would be one of those who should hear the "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." He feared it was wrong to doubt, but he could not help the doubt coming to his mind as to whether cross old Miss Debby was one of the Lord's people whom to aid was to serve Christ himself; but he took refuge when that question arose in that other text, "To do good and to distribute forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

The pain in Miss Debby's back had only been the first in a long procession of pains. For several weeks she lay in her bed, suffering, helpless, and cross. The women in the neighbourhood took turns in nursing her; and a serious matter they found it to be, kind souls! In Hallicasset, however, one need only be sick or in trouble of any sort to be sure of receiving tender care and sympathy without limit.

The three boys who had, as we have seen,

taken it in hand to look after Miss Debby's comfort, found now that it was impossible to carry on their labour of love in secret. The lonely dignity of the old house was, for the time, destroyed by the coming and going of many people. Whether she liked it or not, the neighbours passed through the kitchen at pleasure now; yes, and into her closets, her store-room, her cellar. It was no time to stand upon ceremony when there were drinks and poultices and broths to be made, linen to be hunted up, and all the requirements of serious illness met. The boys talked over the propriety of stopping their several tasks; but the conclusion to which they arrived was that it would be "too mean for anything" to desert Miss Debby in her trouble. They therefore went quietly on as before—Nat keeping the path in order; Tom cutting the wood for whoever happened to be there to make fire; and Ralph doing all the errands that were required. Hitherto, this had perhaps been the easiest of the tasks assumed by the three; but now that, at any hour of day or night, he was likely to be summoned to run for the doctor or carry a prescription to the drug store, it was decidedly the hardest. They all encouraged

each other during this trying time with the thought that it was not play, but real service they were offering to the Lord; and many a prayer was uttered by the friends that God would accept the barley loaf, and in some way use it as a blessing to Miss Debby.

He did.

For weeks the poor sick woman tossed on her bed, and groaned and fretted and scolded. Nobody waited on her satisfactorily; nobody could shake up a pillow or make a cup of gruel to suit her. At last she made up her mind she was going to die. The doctor said she was getting better, but Miss Debby could not endure contradiction. She was sure she was near her end, and would not allow doctor or nurse to say a contrary word. "Near her end?" In all her life no thought like this had forced itself into the heart of this hard, selfish, and unrepentant sinner. A member of the church, in good standing, was Miss Debby. She thought of that too, and tried to get comfort from it in the long hours of the night-time, when, more painful than all her bodily pain, the expectation of death beset her. A member of the church in Hallicasset, would she also be a member of the Church above?

would she, by the mere stopping of her breath, be changed from the cross-grained, selfish woman, peering out from her bay-window in continual hope of beholding some wrong or sorrow over which to chuckle in secret or prate in public, to one of that white-robed multitude who love and are beloved, and whose song of praise and thanksgiving ever rises fresh and new for the love that had redeemed them? God had wrought many miracles in bygone times; could he, would he, perform such a miracle as this?

The doctor was right, and for once in her life Miss Debby was wrong. She did not die; she got well. There was a tedious period of convalescence, however, very trying to patient and nurses. The good women who had taken turns in attending to her wants, while they longed for her recovery, dreaded the sharp speeches with which she was sure to comment on the various changes in house-keeping matters rendered necessary by her illness. Scolding and fretting enough there would be, they were sure, when Miss Debby first came down stairs.

During those quiet days that came between sickness and recovery, when Miss Debby's pain

was not severe enough to absorb her attention, and she could sit for several hours together bolstered up in an arm-chair before the fire, she had many questions to ask about the management of affairs during her illness. She wanted to know who had watched with her at the worst; who had called to see how she was; from whom she had received such and such delicacies. When all her inquiries were answered, she would sit, her head resting against the pillows and her eyes closed, thinking, thinking; though what those absorbing thoughts were nobody knew.

One day, when Mrs. Sinclair was taking her turn in the sick-room, Miss Debby took her by surprise with the direct question: "Who is the man that has done all the errands, and chopped the fire-wood, and attended to all the rest of the chores while I have been laid up?"

Mrs. Sinclair's face must have had a telltale flush upon it, but she only replied that she had not seen any man about.

Miss Debby's sharp eyes were not to be deceived. "You know," said she, "and it is only fair I should know too. Long before I was taken down—indeed, nearly all winter—somebody has attended to everything for me as

faithfully as if he was paid regularly. It can't be any one that works for the sake of getting something by it, either. It must be a person that thinks a good deal of me—yes," she repeated, abstractedly, "that thinks a good deal of me. Why, not only has he done all the outside work, but on cold Sundays he has had the thoughtfulness to put a foot-stove in my pew at church, and many other such attentions has he paid me. Now, I have been a miserable old wretch all this time; I never have put myself out to do a kindness to anybody; and now you women-folks have all come in to take care of me, as if I was your own flesh and blood; and this man—"

Mrs. Sinclair was busy dusting the room, and had her back turned toward the invalid; but when there came a tremor in the voice, and finally the sentence was finished with a sob, she looked round in great surprise. Surely her ears deceived her. Could it be possible that Miss Debby was crying? Yes, indeed she was; and when Mrs. Sinclair stepped to her side and handed her a handkerchief, she hid her face upon the astonished woman's shoulder and wept without restraint, just like a little child.

Mrs. Sinclair did her best to comfort her,

but felt at a loss as to how it was to be done. Miss Debby was not one to be comforted by ordinary rules. She felt too as one might who undertakes to stroke and fondle a dog, quiet for the moment, but known to be of a ferocious disposition; at any instant he might growl and show his teeth. Thinking it might aid in soothing her distress, Mrs. Sinclair thought it best to break her only half-made promise of secrecy, and tell Miss Debby the whole story of the boys' undertaking. Instead of soothing, however, this gave a fresh impulse to the sick woman's tears, and Mrs. Sinclair, quite perplexed at the state of affairs, began to fear she had allowed her charge to sit up too long, and forthwith hurried her back to bed.

Not only Mrs. Sinclair, but all the neighbours who came in to see Miss Debby were puzzled at her altered manner. Her voice was more gentle and her words more mild than ever before. One old woman said in a meaning way to her family, when she returned from a call at the Crump house, "They needn't tell me she's getting better; such changes as that show pretty plain that she's heard her call to go over Jordan. It ain't in the natur' of things for Debby Crump to speak so soft and

so thankful like, any more'n for sour apples to turn into sweet ones."

But, for all such croakings, Miss Debby did not pass over Jordan; she continued to get better, and was in a reasonable time seated again in her bay-window, able to dispense with doctor and nurses, and getting on much the same as formerly, except that by great efforts on the part of certain friends a girl was established in the kitchen to do the house-work and see to her mistress's comfort. Miss Debby did not pass over Jordan, but she did pass over a boundary-line that lies somewhere in every Christian's life—the line between self-seeking and seeking the Lord. Miss Debby had supposed heretofore that this had been done years and years ago, when she had joined the church. She had taken up her cross, as she had been used to say, when she was quite a girl, and had borne it ever since. If so, it was a cross with no Saviour upon it.

One day in early spring there came a messenger to Tom Sinclair and Ralph and Nat Kennedy while they were in school, saying that Miss Crump requested the pleasure of their company to tea that same afternoon. The like of this had never been known. Had the

shah of Persia sent a similar invitation, it could not have been received with greater surprise or obeyed with greater timidity. It seemed odd to stand in such awe of one to whom they had performed such valuable service the winter through ; but Tom, had the choice been given, would far rather have cut all the wood in Miss Debby's shed, Nat would have made a path after the heaviest snow-storm, and Ralph have gone back and forth on errands all day long. As, however, the choice had not been given, the three dressed themselves with the greatest care, and at the proper hour rang the door-bell of the Crump house. The maid ushered them into the pleasant sitting-room, where Miss Debby sat at her work-table as in former times. She looked a trifle paler now ; her nose, if that were possible, was sharper at the point, but the little bow on her cap didn't "show fight" to-day, as the boys had often declared it used to. Her voice too, as she welcomed her guests, lacked the shrillness of its accustomed key, and her eyes met theirs with as mild a gaze as their own mothers' could have done. Miss Debby did not give them time to feel shy, but entertained them until tea was ready with books and engravings, as well

as shells and curiosities brought from over the sea, many years before, by a certain member of the Crump family, who had been captain of a trading vessel. And what a tea they had ! As Nat confided to his mother afterward, Miss Crump couldn't have hit it better about having things that boys like if she had been a boy herself.

When they returned to the sitting-room after doing full justice to the dainties provided for them, the real object of the visit was revealed. Miss Debby wished to thank her three friends in person for their disinterested kindness ; she wished also to hear from their own lips the story of the barley loaf project ; and lastly, she desired the aid of these boys in carrying out the plans of benevolence she had formed since the light and warmth of true Christian love had begun to glow within her.

We cannot take time to enter into the details of the good works accomplished by what was called the " Barley Loaf Society ;" it is enough to say that Miss Debby's money and sensible judgment, together with the willing assistance of the boys, brought comfort and hope to many a troubled heart in Hallicasset and its neighbourhood. I do not mean that all at once this

cross and disagreeable old woman became a pattern of saintliness ; that is a work of time, and human nature, like fruit, must pass gradually from its state of sourness and hardness to the excellence of its fully-ripened condition. Some fruits indeed retain in their perfection a wholesome acid, and that is to most tastes more agreeable than the insipid sweetness of certain other kinds. Miss Debby was, for the rest of her life, the same thing among people that such are among fruits. Her sourness was by grace modified to a good-natured clearness of discernment and readiness in reading character ; and when at last she died in a good old age, her loss was felt by many, young and old, to whom she had been as a ministering spirit.

The Barley Loaf Society outlived its author. Ralph and Nat Kennedy, with their friend Tom Sinclair, worked away with united efforts after Miss Debby's death, aided as they were in carrying out their charitable schemes by the liberal bequest made in her will for that purpose and entrusted to their care.

Thus it was that this barley loaf, given to the Lord by three boys, was accepted, was blessed, and multiplied to the feeding of many hungry souls.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOVERFIELDS.

THE old stage-coach, feeble and rheumatic in every joint, went creaking along the road between Griggstown and Cloverfields. Twice a week did the poor decrepit vehicle perform its laborious journey. Each Wednesday and Saturday afternoon, for as many years back as most of the Cloverfields people could remember, its yellow-painted sides had appeared before the door of Peterkin's dry-goods and provision store, which was also the village post-office, at about five o'clock. This was its time when the road was in good condition, and half an hour later when the snows of winter and the mud and slush of early spring made it impossible for its aged springs to perform the journey rapidly.

The particular afternoon with which we have to do was one of unusual comfort to both stage and passengers. The road was firm and smooth; the sky of that rare tranquil blue whose depth

makes you think there must be a soul in it, like some eyes of the same sort ; the air had just that delicious quality which is not cold, any more than it is hot, but full of that balminess and vigor which make what we call Indian summer the perfection of weather. The country, all around— But no, I will not begin making remarks about the country, for the passengers inside the stage are busy doing the same thing, and surely they ought to know more about it than anybody else. These passengers were four in number—a stout, elderly German woman, having a lapful of parcels, a geranium in a pot, and a basket of doughnuts at her feet ; a lame soldier ; and two young girls. It was not the elderly woman nor the lame soldier who criticised the landscape, you may be sure ; indeed, they both were quiet travellers, and left all the talking to their neighbours.

“ Oh, Edna, do lean over this side and look back at the hill we have just passed ! See the bright colours of those trees against the blue background of the sky.”

The girl addressed as Edna leaned over and looked as she was bidden, and then settled herself back in her seat without any reply but a yawn.

"Now, isn't it lovely?" asked her enthusiastic companion.

Thus questioned, Miss Edna took the trouble to reply. "Why, yes," she said, with lazy indifference in face and tone, "I suppose it is—to you; but any one that has been abroad as long as I have don't find much to admire in the stupid scenery of America."

"I suppose not," said the other, with a mingling of disappointment and respect in her voice. "No doubt in Switzerland there are much finer views than anything about here."

"In Switzerland!" echoed Miss Edna. "You dear little goose! The idea of naming Switzerland in the same breath with Connecticut! Why, one need go no farther than England and Scotland to find views as much superior to this as one of our fine city churches is to that little unpainted school-house yonder."

This speech silenced Dolly—for that was her name—and she did not venture to speak another word about the scenery during the remainder of the ride. She kept her eyes busy, however, and not a little brook or a finely-shaped tree, a pleasant farm-house or a moss-covered rock, did they pass but Dolly

noticed and admired it, and treasured it in her memory against the time when she should be back in the city again, shut out from nature by high walls of brick and stone.

There is no better opportunity than this, while the clumsy stage goes lazily along the road to Cloverfields, of telling you something about its two passengers who figure in our story. We must begin with Edna Ravenel, because she is six months older than her cousin, and because also—though the reason is not clear to my mind—whenever the two girls were introduced to any one Edna was first. On account of her mother's feeble health the family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Ravenel, Charles, the only son, and Edna, the only daughter, had spent several years in Europe, going now to some noted baths, now to some famed retreat, where the climate suited the invalid's needs. Finally, wearied with their unsettled life, and believing that, after all, Mrs. Ravenel would be as well in her own comfortable home as in the various inns in which they were obliged to stop, the family returned to New York. Edna had hitherto known very little of her relatives; but as her aunt and uncle Dexter lived in the same neighbourhood, and she and Dolly were

sent to the same school, the two girls became intimate friends.

Dolly Dexter was in many respects a decided contrast to her cousin. Edna was a stylish young lady, while Dolly was a plainly-dressed school-girl. Edna could take her part in a conversation in a roomful of older people; Dolly blushed and stammered for very shame if obliged to answer a question in company. Edna had consented to go to school one year more, "to finish off," and be ready to make a good appearance in society; Dolly went to school for the sake of learning all she could. Through all the details of character the cousins differed, yet they were very fond of each other.

There came a letter one day in early fall from Aunt Faith Appleby, begging that her two young relatives, whom she had not seen since their infancy, would come to Cloverfields and make her a good long visit. Dolly was eager to go, and teased her own father and mother, and then Edna's, into giving Aunt Faith's invitation an answer of acceptance. All sorts of objections were brought forth by the elders. It was high time for the girls to begin their music-lessons for the winter; the

school-term had already commenced; the mothers wanted them at home, to be consulted and fitted with winter clothing; the journey too was a long one, and neither Mr. Dexter nor Mr. Ravenel, nor even Charles, Edna's brother, could spare time to accompany them. "It was just as well," Edna said, for the two names, "Aunt Faith" and "Cloverfields," sounded very common to her ears. "She was sure it must be a pokey, out-of-the-way village, that Cloverfields, and that her aunt must be a very ordinary person, altogether different from her own dear mamma. And what society could there be?—surely none that was fit for her, a young lady who had recently returned from Europe."

I do not know just how she managed it, but Dolly carried her point. The two girls started off alone, and arrived without any accident or delay at that part of their journey where we joined them—namely, in the stage-coach between Griggsville and Cloverfields. The driver had been requested to set these passengers down at Mr. Silas Appleby's house. As soon as they came in sight of the great elm trees of Cloverfields, Dolly began looking out for the house, of which her imagination had drawn a

very distinct picture. It was to be a Gothic cottage with a pretty flower-garden in front, perhaps a fountain playing in the midst; and Aunt Faith would stand at the gate to welcome her two nieces. A tall and dignified person she must be, with a gentle voice and quiet manners. It was to be exactly like the first chapter in a story, this introduction to Cloverfields. While Dolly was busy deciding on the probable appearance of her uncle Silas, her fancies were suddenly put to flight by the scraping and bumping of the stage as it drew up before Peterkin's store. Here the German woman and the lame soldier got out. It took some time to count the packages and lift the doughnuts and flower-pot safely out, as well as to leave the mail-bag and attend to various parcels with which the driver had been entrusted. In the midst of it all he took time to put his head in the window and tell the young ladies "not to worry, for he would be through directly, and have them at Silas Appleby's in a jiffy."

Edna's face was full of indignation, but it was all lost on the good-natured driver, who had turned away as soon as he finished speaking.

"To think, Dolly, of the fellow's impudence!" she said with a voice to match her face.

"Why, what was it?" asked Dolly, who had just come out of a brown study.

"Didn't you hear him speak to us in that familiar tone? And he called Uncle Silas by his name, without even a 'Mr.' before it. Ah, you ought to ride once in a French diligence, and see how respectful such people are abroad. This America is so rough I cannot get used to it."

At another time Dolly would have put her cousin in good-humour again by asking to be told all about French diligences and drivers, but now her mind was full of present interests. "In a jiffy," as they had been told, the stage had taken them a few rods farther, and stopped before—not the Gothic cottage of Dolly's fancy, but a square white house with green blinds, having a garden in front, it is true; but instead of the fountain and gravelled walks, the well-kept shrubbery, and rare flowers of her dream, there was nothing but a great tangle of hollyhocks, four-o'clocks, and sweet-peas on one side of the yard, and two or three tall, flaunting sun-flowers on the other. At the

gate, sure enough, stood Aunt Faith; but in place of the tall, dignified person Dolly was looking for, a little chunk of a woman, her whole face in a twinkle of delight, stood with outstretched arms to welcome her stranger nieces.

"All safe and sound, eh, girls?" she chirruped forth between the hearty smacks she bestowed first on one, then on the other. "You took good care of 'em, Sol, did you? That's right." This was addressed to the driver. "Did you remember to ask about the red flannel, as I told you? But no matter; next time will do. Come in, girls, come in: there's your uncle Silas waiting to see you. Which of you is Dolly, and which Edna? But never mind. Go right in that room where you see the light. I'll run to the kitchen and put supper on the table while you get your things off, and then I'll take time for a good look at you."

The moment the girls found themselves alone they looked at each other and laughed.

"Didn't I tell you so, Dolly?" whispered Edna. "I knew how it would be the minute I heard the name. I wonder what our uncle Silas is like? He must have run away when he saw us coming."

Barley Hoaxes.



"Come in, girls."

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Dolly's disappointment had made her silent. She bathed her face and brushed her curls, then turned to look at the picture of little Samuel hanging over the bed, without saying a word. Though her air-castle had fallen to the ground, she was not going to confess the shock it gave her. Edna was before the little glass tying her neck-ribbon in a fresh bow, and wondering while she did so what impression she was going to make on these country relations, when Aunt Faith reappeared to call them out to supper. The table was set in the kitchen. Edna uttered an exclamation in French when she saw it, which happily no one but Dolly understood. A tall man, already seated before a dish of smoking pork and beans, rose and came forward to shake hands with the two girls. "How d'ye do? Glad to see you at Cloverfields," said Uncle Silas, and sat down again.

"Now make yourself at home and eat all you can, girls," was Aunt Faith's advice, given in her cordial chirp; and to enable them to act upon it she busied herself in piling their plates full of beans and apple-sauce, pickles and doughnuts. Edna and Dolly exchanged mischievous glances across the table. They had

never seen anything like this before. Their mothers were both New England women, but had been so long separated from their early home that they retained none of its peculiarities; and, as I have before said, these young people were now making their first visit Down East.

After supper Aunt Faith invited the girls to sit down and keep her company while she washed the dishes; "Silas," she said, "had to be out attending to his chores, and they would have a nice chance for a talk."

Dolly asked for a towel, and volunteered to wipe the cups and saucers, but Edna drew her chair as far as she could from the table where the work was being performed and gave herself up to thoughts of the superior ways they had of doing things in Europe.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Aunt Faith, noticing the awkward way in which Dolly performed her task. "I guess you don't go in the kitchen very often at home. Those little white fingers look more fit for playing tunes on the piano than for washing dishes."

Dolly's cheeks flushed, but she did not answer. She feared it would hurt her aunt's feelings if she acknowledged that this was

really the first time in her life she had assisted at such work.

Edna, however, was restrained by no such delicacy. "Yes indeed, aunt," said the young lady, speaking for the first time, "Dolly plays quite prettily for one who has had no advantages."

"No advantages, my dear!" interposed Mrs. Appleby, in a tone of surprise.

"I mean, of course, that she has been under American teachers, and cannot be expected to do as well as those who have been trained by foreign masters. If she could take a few lessons of Signor Sorelli, for instance—he taught me last winter in Florence—she would soon play charmingly. But," added Edna, with a little sneer, "if Dolly toughens her fingers by doing housework while she is here, she will completely spoil her fine touch."

Mrs. Appleby turned from her dish-pan and looked at the speaker. There was a mingled expression of regret and amusement on her happy round face, but she made no reply in words.

When the dishes were put away and the hearth swept up, Mrs. Appleby led the way to the parlour, where a fire had been lighted in

honour of the guests. "Silas and I generally sit in the kitchen evenings; it seems more home-like than in the parlour. Often we don't light a lamp even, for husband does nothing but smoke his pipe, and I take the time for knitting. He used to be a great reader, but since his eyes have been so bad he don't dare look at a book. Here, Dolly, you sit in this rocking-chair, and, Edna, I want you to open the piano and let us hear a little music. It's out of tune, and maybe not fit for your grand pieces. I think a great deal of my old piano, though. It belonged to your mothers and me when we were girls, and hardly an hour of the day in those times but that one or other of us was at it. Come, my dear, we're waiting for you."

Edna had taken her seat before the old-fashioned instrument, and was running her fingers over the keys, meaning to begin the first time her aunt Faith paused to take breath. At these words she struck the first chords of a brilliant waltz, but stopped before she had played many bars. "Do excuse me, aunt," she said: "I can't bear to insult the piece by trying to render it on such a piano. I suppose the instrument was well enough in

its time," she added, by way of apology, "but it is shockingly out of tune." As she spoke the young girl rose and joined her aunt and cousin at the fire.

A shade passed over Mrs. Appleby's cheerful face. She loved the old piano for the sake of its associations with her girlhood, and it pained her to hear it spoken of with disrespect.

Dolly saw the momentary shadow, and understood it. "Aunt Faith," she said at once, "I can't play nearly so well as Edna; but if you would like to hear me, I will try. It will be so pleasant to tell mother I have played on the same instrument she used to practice on when she was my age!"

Dolly wisely chose a piece that did not show off the imperfections of the piano; it was an arrangement of the old Scotch song called "Robin Adair," with simple variations. She received a full reward in the thankful smile on her aunt's face.

"Well, now, that does me good," said Mrs. Appleby. "Why, Dolly, that was my favourite song years before you were born. I didn't suppose it was fashionable in these days to play old tunes like 'Robin Adair.'"

Edna was on the point of replying that it

really was not, but a quick glance of remonstrance from Dolly checked her.

It was late—that is, judging by Cloverfields' customs—when the aunt and nieces separated for the night. Mrs. Appleby looked in the bed-room to see that everything was comfortable for her guests, and her last words were an injunction to sleep soundly, and not to rise next morning until she knocked at the door. “Your uncle and I take breakfast about half-past five, but you shall have yours whenever you like; I can't expect you city girls to take all at once to our country ways. There! Good-night, dears!”

If the kiss bestowed on Dolly had a trifle more heartiness than that given to Edna, the good aunt was unconscious of it, yet it told plainly her first impression of the stranger nieces.

Hardly was the door closed when Edna exclaimed, “Isn't it droll? It is just as I knew it would be, Dolly. Did you ever see such queer people? And that supper!—beans, pickles, and doughnuts. Bah! I am dreadfully home-sick already, aren't you?”

“No indeed!” was Dolly's emphatic reply. “I think Aunt Faith is ever so good, and I

am very fond of doughnuts. Things are very different from what we have at home, but that is the best of it: we came for a change, you know."

"And that uncle of ours!" Edna continued. "No wonder the stage-driver did not put 'Mr.' before his name. There don't seem to be any distinctions in society at all in this country. Well, it is all the better for Uncle Silas that there are not; but oh, Dolly, I do wish you had been abroad; then you could understand my feelings."

"I am glad I have not," said Dolly, quietly, "if going abroad would make me discontented with my own country."

"Oh, I don't mean that, but—" Edna turned from the examination of her own features in the tiny looking-glass to see if her cousin was paying sufficient attention to warrant the recital of a chapter of her experience in France, which came to her mind at the moment, as proof of the superior manners and ways of Europeans. Dolly was on her knees before her trunk, searching for the collar and apron she intended putting on next morning; and just as Edna looked round she rose with her little Bible in her hand, and sat down near

the light. This action checked the account, whatever it was, or at least deferred it until the next opportunity.

The tired travellers slept soundly ; and when Mrs. Appleby's cheery voice sounded at the door, " Wake up, children, breakfast is waiting for you," the sun was high in the heavens. Such brightness and warmth and comfort as greeted the girls when they entered the kitchen half an hour later ! Aunt Faith's stout little person moving briskly between the stove and the well-spread table ; the big chair with its cushions of gay chintz ; the kitten catching flies on the window-sill ; the big white-faced clock ticking in the corner ; the bright stripes in the rag carpet,—all combined in making a picture so attractive that Dolly at least carried a remembrance of it in her mind for many a year after ; and when, in the course of time, she was busy fitting up a home of her own, she announced her intention of furnishing one room as nearly as possible like Aunt Faith Appleby's kitchen.

Edna's home-sickness was entirely cured when, shortly after dinner, Uncle Silas called her to the yard to show her a pretty pony with a side-saddle on, which he had borrowed for her

use during the whole visit. Edna had been to riding-school, and apart from the real pleasure in store for her, was glad of this opportunity of showing her skill in horsemanship. Aunt Faith brought out an old-fashioned and well-worn riding-habit, and when she was ready the whole family came out to the gate to see her mount and start off. After this Cloverfields was not the dull place she had at first declared it, and she announced to Dolly, on her return from this first ride, that she was quite willing to stay as long as her mamma would allow. As for Dolly, she was well pleased at this change in her cousin's mind, and much obliged to Uncle Silas for bringing it about. She did not know how to ride, so Edna had the pony entirely to herself. While she was off day after day, galloping over the country, getting a healthier glow on her cheeks, and making collections of mosses and autumn leaves to carry back to her city home, Dolly was taking equal enjoyment in helping Aunt Faith, and learning how to make cakes and puddings, with which she was going to astonish her father and mother when she returned to the city. She took daily walks with Uncle Silas too, at first out of compassion for the lonely, quiet man, but afterward for the plea-

sure she found in his company. He was a confident man, and very simple—Edna said countrified—in his manners; but any one that took the trouble, as did Dolly, to get really acquainted with Silas Appleby, was sure to be repaid by the store of information, the fund of anecdote, as well as the wise Christian judgment, he displayed.

Sunday came. Edna sighed as she stood putting up her long hair before the glass that morning. "Won't it be horrid?" she said. "I can't have my ride on Tip, I suppose, because it wouldn't be the proper thing. I wonder what these country folks do with their Sundays?"

"Why, dear, didn't you see that pretty little church the day we came? You must have passed it on your rides. Uncle Silas says they have an excellent minister too. I suppose we will go to church twice, just as we do at home." Dolly's reply was given in a tone of surprise; she could not understand her cousin.

"Well, I suppose if you go I shall have to," said Edna, dolefully; "but think what sort of music they must have! If there is an organ, likely it is of the same ancient, out-of-tune class as Aunt Faith's piano; and the choir will sing

through their noses. Oh, Dolly, you have no idea how grand the services are in the English cathedrals. If you had ever heard the music and the preaching that I have, you would know what a trial to my nerves this country church is going to be to-day."

"I suppose so," said Dolly, briefly.

As the girls left their room, and turned toward the kitchen, they heard a voice singing to a familiar old tune the words—

"Welcome, delightful morn,
Thou day of sacred rest!
I hail thy kind return:
Lord, make these moments blest.
From the low train of mortal toys
I soar to reach immortal joys."

It was Uncle Silas, singing, out of the fulness of his heart, his favourite Sabbath hymn. He had not missed singing it on Sunday morning while he was waiting for breakfast for more than twenty years. The cousins stood outside waiting for the hymn to be finished before they should enter. Edna's eyes twinkled with amusement at the queer twists in the tune, and Dolly, hearing the melody made unto the Lord in the heart of the singer, was saying to herself that no cathedral music could possibly be

as sweet to her ears as Uncle Silas's old-fashioned hymn.

The whole family attended church that morning. It was a plain building, this Cloverfields meeting-house, as the people there called it, and Dolly knew, when her cousin looked about on the windows and ceiling, that she was contrasting their simplicity with the grandeur of the cathedrals she talked so much about. The singing also was such as to jar upon Edna's sensitive ears, and in her sympathy for her companion Dolly lost much of the enjoyment she would have had if Edna had remained at home.

The minister rose and gave out his text: "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" Then followed a sermon, simple and practical, upon the duty of devoting our small possessions and small abilities unto the Lord, not asking the faithless question of Andrew, but believing that Jesus will as surely feed starving souls with our loving influence and effort as he did the five thousand hungry men with the five barley loaves and the two small fishes. Very earnestly did the preacher exhort his flock not to hold back from giving and doing in the Lord's cause for shame that

they had so little to give. He reminded them that the widow's mite was pronounced of more value than the large amounts cast in the treasury by the rich. He gave more than one instance of grand schemes of benevolence in our own time which had originated in the humble efforts of one or two loving hearts. He closed his discourse by repeating a little poem which had fallen under his notice, he said, just when he was selecting a theme for his sermon, and had formed the basis of the thoughts he had just presented to his people's consideration.

There was no afternoon service at the Cloverfields church, so after dinner, when Mr. Appleby seated himself in the kitchen arm-chair, put his head back among the brilliant chintz roses, and placing a newspaper over his face prepared for that rest of the body which properly accompanies the Sabbath soul-rest, his wife gave a suggestive nod to her nieces, and they, taking the hint, quietly withdrew to their own apartment.

"Now for comfort!" exclaimed Edna as she laid aside her street-dress and put on her pretty wrapper. "I'm going to lie down and read; what will you do, Dolly?"

Dolly had been standing at the window, idly drumming on the pane to keep time to her reflections, while her cousin was making these arrangements for rest. At Edna's question she left the window and took a low seat at the foot of the bed.

"I don't know what to do," she replied, gravely. "I've been thinking—"

"So I perceive," said Edna, laughing. "Well, out with it! What is your thought like? Tell me, and I'll help get it off your mind. Thinking is not becoming to you, dear. Look in the glass, and see how you are wrinkling your forehead. But the scowl is bigger than the glass. Dolly, when we go home let us buy Aunt Faith a good-sized mirror and send it to her, for the benefit of her future guests. But there! I won't talk any more nonsense; I am going to listen to you."

Dolly's mind was too absorbed for her to be disturbed by the nonsense, and as soon as Edna ceased she said gravely, "That sermon has set me thinking. We ought to make some offering to the Lord. I never have in all my life; have you?"

"Why, no," replied Edna, soberly too, for she as well as Dolly had been impressed by the

sermon. "What can we do? If we had a fortune to devote to founding an orphan asylum, or learning enough to write good books, it would be very well; but seeing that we have neither, what then?"

Dolly did not answer, and the next minute Edna continued: "Remember, you little dreamer, that we have never been commissioned to perform some wonderful deed like Joan d'Arc, and, for my part, I have no inclination toward the heroic or the romantic, and don't desire to hand down my name to posterity in any such way."

Dolly looked distressed; she felt that her cousin wilfully misunderstood her. "Now, Edna," she exclaimed, "you know I do not mean any such thing. I only thought that if—"

Edna interrupted her with a kiss, taking the trouble to rise from her comfortable position to bestow it. "Yes, I know; go right on and tell me your plan, and I promise not to bother you any more. Do you think there is any opening for us to do a good work here at Cloverfields?"

Dolly's face brightened, and, reassured by her companion's serious manner, she spoke with entire confidence: "Yes, indeed I do. I

was wondering if that sermon did not start the same questions in your mind as in my own; and now I believe it did, if you would only confess it."

"It was a good sermon," Edna assented, with unusual seriousness. "It made me think of the sort of woman I should like to be."

"Why not say, the sort of woman you mean to be?" questioned Dolly, gently.

Edna had no answer ready for this appeal, and so returned to the more general subject: "What is there for us to do in a place like this? In the city there are ever so many ways of doing good. You can give money to orphans' homes and foreign missions, or you can take a class in Sunday-school, or belong to a benevolent society. There are plenty of things. But here nobody is poor enough to be helped that way, and I suppose there is no such thing as a benevolent society. Pshaw, Dolly! let us wait until we get home before we undertake to find any barley loaves to offer the Lord."

Edna, evidently satisfied with her own suggestion, changed her position, and taking up a paper that lay on the bed was presently absorbed in its contents.

As for Dolly, her thoughts could not be so

easily diverted. The words of the sermon kept repeating themselves in her memory, and she felt that she was more responsible for the good she left undone than she had been before she heard that plain statement of duty. There was no use in seeking help from Edna at present; she could not devise any plan of doing good for herself; so she decided on doing the very best thing she could have done—namely, going in search of her aunt Faith and asking her advice.

She found Mrs. Appleby sitting on the back porch with a book of sermons in her hand, trying to read, but really feeling the influence of God more through the tender touch of that balmy October air, the soft masses of cloud that seemed like pillows of rest for wearied souls, the faint rustle of falling leaves that varied without disturbing the silence, than through any printed words.

“Can I come?” asked Dolly’s eyes as she opened the door and saw her aunt; and Mrs. Appleby answered her by moving to make room for her on the long seat whereon she sat.

“Tell me, auntie,” said Dolly, at last breaking the tranquil silence—“tell me where to find a barley loaf.”

"You dear child!" Mrs. Appleby exclaimed, with her usual happy, chirping tone, "that's the very thing I thought of when I saw you there at the door. That sermon—wasn't it good? But I need not ask you, when you have just shown the effect it had upon you. A barley loaf, eh?" she added, musingly. "I shall have to think.—My dear," she began, presently—for Mrs. Appleby's thoughts were never allowed to keep her tongue silent for long at a time—"I wonder if you noticed—but guess you did not—when you were playing for me yesterday just before dusk, the little girl that stood outside on the porch listening?"

"No," said Dolly.

"Well, that was Letty Palmer, who lives with her aunt in that small brown house across the creek. Letty was a beautiful child, and so active and full of fun, until, two years ago this fall, she had the scarlet fever. She was very sick—indeed, the doctor gave her up—but she got well at last, only the disease settled in her eyes, and she is now entirely blind."

"Poor little thing!" said Dolly, compassionately.

"Well, as I was saying, the child was hovering about yesterday to hear you play. She is

so fond of music that she would go without her dinner any day to hear a tune. It just came into my head that if you would let her come in now and then, and you play some of your sweet tunes for her, it would be as acceptable a barley loaf as you could find."

"Certainly: I will do it with pleasure; but, Aunt Faith, that is a very small thing; I want to do something more than that."

"Ah, dearie, don't you be in a hurry for great things. Just keep your eyes open every day to see in what manner the Lord has need of you, and you'll find enough put right in your way to do. There! wasn't that Silas calling me? I guess I'll have to go in-doors, now, but you sit there Dolly, and think it out."

How she thought it out was evident from the request she made of her aunt the next morning, that she would take her to see the little blind girl.

"No," said Mrs. Appleby, "it would frighten Letty to have us call upon her in that formal way. She will be sure to come in the course of the day to listen for the sound of the piano. I'll watch for her. She is a timid child, and will be happier to be allowed to listen without having much notice taken of her."

Mrs. Appleby was correct in her surmise that Letty would come before the day was over, with the hope of hearing some music. Pianos were not as common then in Cloverfields as they are now; and indeed music of any kind, except the squeaky sounds of the church organ on Sundays, was a luxury rarely enjoyed there. Mrs. Appleby found the child that morning with her face pressed against the parlour window listening. She did not speak to her, but went at once in search of Dolly, and advised her to go quietly into the parlour, leaving the door open, and begin to play. Dolly did so, and watched as she ran her fingers over the keys the smile of delight that lit up the small face outside the window. Dolly began trying experiments; from a sparkling galop she passed to a plaintive waltz; and when she glanced at Letty, she saw tears rolling down her cheeks. All at once she struck up "Pop Goes the Weasel." It was funny to see the immediate change in the child's countenance; she smiled through her tears, and began moving her head in time to the lively tune. Then Dolly played a discord, and watched its effect; Letty scowled, and made a gesture of dissatisfaction. It was evident that with the loss of sight there had come to the

child a double measure of happiness in the sense of hearing. For more than an hour Dolly went on, drawing more music from the old instrument than it had given out for many a day. She became so interested in recalling one piece after another that she presently forgot all about the listening Letty and everybody else. Fortunately, Edna was taking her daily exercise on the pony's back, or her sensitive nerves would have suffered greatly. By and by Dolly broke off playing with a sudden start; something had touched her shoulder. She turned around, and saw Letty close beside her. The child had been drawn by the music, as a needle by a magnet, and hardly knowing what she did had come nearer and nearer the door, had entered, and found her way to the piano. She had even ventured to pass her fingers over Dolly's dress in that peculiar way which the blind call *seeing*, since touch is sight to them. Her enjoyment had driven away her shyness, and she recognized the strange lady as a friend to whom no introduction was necessary.

Dolly did not speak, but gently took Letty's hand and placed it on the keys; then said, "Strike." Letty obeyed; it was harmony. The little girl jumped up and down, and her

gleeful laugh rang through the house. "Let me do that again," she said.

Dolly placed her fingers on certain other keys: "Now!"

Instantly and exactly the chord was struck, and again Letty jumped and laughed. Then Dolly, putting her arm around the happy child, drew her toward the sofa, and there seating herself lifted Letty upon her lap. Letty made no resistance; they were friends.

"Would you like to come here every day, dear, and hear me play?" asked Dolly.

"Yes, ma'am, that I would!" was the prompt answer. "May I? Will you let me?" and the little girl's fingers began passing lightly over her new friend's face as she spoke. "You are real pretty; your hair curls; you have dimples." Letty made these announcements just as she might have repeated a discovery of rivers and towns on a raised map.

"How would you like to have me teach you some tunes, so that you might play them yourself when I go away?"

"Oh my! oh my! oh my!" exclaimed the little girl, beginning to cry; and then she threw her arms around Dolly's neck and sobbed aloud. Dolly did not restrain her;

she knew what it all meant, and waited until the outburst of feeling had passed. Then she disengaged herself from the eager clasp, and told her little friend that she must go home and tell her aunt all about it; and if her aunt was willing, she might come the next afternoon and get a lesson.

If Letty's heart was brimful of happiness, as certainly it was, Dolly's pleasure was almost as great. She ran to her room, as soon as she had dismissed the child, to fall on her knees and thank God for this opportunity of doing good, and to ask him to accept this undertaking at her hands, and bless it.

When the family met at dinner, Mrs. Appleby began asking her niece how she had got along with blind Letty, and expressed her satisfaction when she heard the result of her own proposal.

"Pshaw!" said Edna; "it will be a great bore, teaching that child every day; and then we have only two more weeks to stay here! She can't learn enough in that time to do any good."

"I think she can," was Dolly's confident reply; and Mrs. Appleby, speaking at the same time, declared that she would not consent

to having the girls leave her in less than a month, at any rate.

"Well," said Edna, presently, "this looks as if you were going to work in earnest to put yesterday's sermon in practice. I believe I shall have to look around and find a barley loaf too. What do you think?"

Dolly was very glad indeed to hear this from Edna, though she did not altogether like the trifling manner in which it was said. Dolly Dexter was so thoroughly in earnest in all her actions and opinions that she could not understand a nature like Edna's, whose goodness or badness was a mere matter of impulse.

"Do tell me," she continued, looking first at her aunt and then her uncle, "what is there I can do?"

"Really, I have not found out yet anything you can do," observed Uncle Silas, drily.

But Aunt Faith was more hopeful. "It does a body good," she said, "to hear you girls taking up Mr. Crane's idea so readily. I must tell him about it. What is there for you to do? Let me think. Why, Edna, I have it, the very thing! You and Tip have found your way before this, I dare say, to the Copp Hollow road."

"Yes, ma'am," said Edna.

"About half a mile out that way there is a settlement of the miserablest creatures you ever saw."—Mrs. Appleby was very apt to forget grammar and dictionary alike when her feelings were aroused.—"The place goes by the name of Hardscrabble."

"I know where you mean, ma'am," said Edna, with considerable interest.

"Well, my dear, what do you think of visiting the poor folks there, finding out the sick ones, you know, and taking them little comforts or teaching the youngsters? A hard set they are, to be sure. You would be certain to come across some very needy cases, and you could give them a trifle according to your judgment."

"No judgment about it, Faith," said Mr. Appleby, with more decision than he was wont to show in regard to other people's affairs. "Edna must not give them a cent. If she chooses to amuse herself by teaching them, well and good."

"Amuse myself!" repeated the young lady, colouring. "That is a very odd way of looking at it, uncle. I am willing to deny myself for the sake of doing good; and, as Aunt

Faith suggests, I think the poor people at Hardscrabble are very fit objects for benevolence. I found it quite the custom with English ladies to have a set of poor families under their care, to visit and teach."

"Hm-m!" said Uncle Silas, and pushed his chair back from the table.

"You are real good girls, both of you!" was Aunt Faith's hearty comment, given in the attempt to cover up her husband's evident lack of appreciation. "I'll do all I can to help you."

Edna went to the back door and called to her uncle that if he pleased she would have Tip saddled at once.

"All right!" he shouted in answer; and Edna ran to her room to get ready for the ride.

Dolly went with her, to help arrange her cousin's habit. "I'm so glad, dear," she whispered. "What made you pretend yesterday that you did not care, when really the sermon impressed you as much as it did me?"

"Oh, I don't know: I had to think it over first. You know I don't jump at things as you do."

The plain truth of the matter was, though neither of the cousins understood it, that while

one was steadfastly striving to do her duty as soon as it was made clear to her, the other did right only by fits and starts, when something struck her fancy, as did this undertaking at Hardscrabble.

Edna felt very comfortable as she rode along that afternoon. The Copp Hollow road was almost as pretty as some places in Europe. The glory of autumn was upon every tree and bush she passed, and the bracing air called forth a glow in her cheeks and a brightness in her eyes, as well as a corresponding energy in her heart. At last she came upon the scene of her benevolent enterprise. A group of tumble-down houses, with rags stuffed in the windows instead of glass, some unpainted, and others with the paint darkened and worn away, broken steps and unhinged gates, dirty-faced children, and one or two sharp-featured women,—these all found place in Edna's first impression of Hardscrabble. She had seen the same things before, but they appeared different to-day, because she looked with a new and personal interest. She drew up before one house, where a large stump lay upon which she could easily alight; but with the manner of a lady accustomed to depend on the service of others,

she paused and looked toward a stout man in the door-way, who stood smoking his pipe and placidly observing her dilemma. He did not move to help her, but chuckled aloud when two of the dirty-faced children ran behind and pulled Tip's tail. This made the animal start, and Edna's indignation came to her aid, so that she dismounted very readily by herself. But as soon as she had done so she was sorry. Tip was a nervous pony; there was nothing to tie him to, and with these mischievous children to torment him she dared not go into the house and leave the poor animal.

The stout man appeared to relent, and came toward her: "Be you goin' in, missus?"

"Yes, if your family are in the house."

"My old 'ooman's there; she's sick a-bed; two or three of the neighbours is there with her. I'll take charge of this 'ere horse if you like to go in."

Edna thanked him, and carefully picked her way through the dirt and rubbish to the door. She knocked. Three or four voices called "Come in!" and she entered. It was a small, close room, smelling of camphor and herb-tea. There was one window, but light and air were thoroughly excluded by means of a big plaid

shawl. The bed filled up the greater part of the room, and the rest of the space was occupied by the neighbours who had come in to see the sick woman. These moved to make way for the young lady. Edna heartily wished she had gone to some other house, but there was no help for it now. She approached the bed. Was there ever, she wondered, such an ugly, witch-like face as that lying on the pillow?

"Are you very sick?" she asked, feeling obliged to say something, since the other women stood by watching, and evidently expecting her to speak.

"Sick! I should think I was!" said the woman. "I went out yesterday, the first time for a week, and coming back I missed my footing somehow"—here the person nearest Edna nudged her, and whispered, "It's drunk that she was"—"and I fell. See there, will you?" and she turned her head slightly, revealing a gash that made the young lady lean against the wall to steady herself, she felt so faint.

"Ain't used to such things, I guess," said one of the group. Edna quickly recovered her self-possession, and said to the injured woman that she had come there to see if there were any persons needing assistance, and that if there

was anything she required for her comfort she might perhaps provide it.

The offer was received with a loud laugh by the bystanders, and the woman to whom it was made, with a well-contrived whine, answered that she would not ask for herself, but that her four children were suffering for the want of clothes and food, and if the kind young lady would give her a trifle of money, she should be followed by her blessing as long as she lived. Edna had not much faith in the ugly old woman, especially as she heard a suppressed laugh behind her, but she felt faint still, and a little fearful as to the effect of a refusal. She took out her purse therefore, and drew from it a two-dollar bill, which she laid in the palm that was stretched out to receive it.

“Is that all you’ve got?” asked the woman, greedily.

Edna made no reply, but pushed her way through the group, and was on the door-step when she heard a shrill voice inviting her to call again. Some boys were seated on the ground playing marbles. Edna turned toward them, and addressed the one with the cleanest face: “Boy, do you go to school?”

The fellow hung his head sheepishly, and muttered some words to the effect that he did not.

“Suppose that a lady should come here every day to teach you—all of you, I mean—would you try your best to learn?”

“Learn what?” asked another of the number, looking inquisitively at her.

“Why, how to read and write, and say hymns and Bible verses. You would like that, I am sure.”

“You don’t ketch Jack Towner with none o’ that ere chaff, missus.” With this unpromising rejoinder the owner of the name rose and walked off, whistling.

“Maybe Joe and me’ll come, pervided you’ll do the proper thing,” said another boy, fixing a pair of keen eyes on her face.

“What do you mean?” Edna asked, with dignity.

“How much d’ye mean to pay a feller that attends your school regular?”

“You ungrateful boy!” exclaimed the girl, now really provoked. “If all the children here are like you, I surely will not come at all.”

The boys were evidently much amused at this

speech, and all started off laughing, mimicking her tone with ridiculous exactness.

Never in her life had Edna come in contact with such a class of people. She was angry and mortified, and said to herself that she wished she had never consented to visit Cloverfields; she wished she had not gone to church to hear that unlucky sermon; she wished she could make Dolly as uncomfortable as she felt herself, for it was certainly Dolly's fault that she had undertaken this wild scheme. But there was no time to waste in such idle reflections, especially with those ill-mannered boys up the road staring at and making fun of her. Where was Tip? Edna looked about, now in real anxiety. The pony was nowhere to be seen, nor the man who had taken him in charge. What should she do? A man was sawing wood behind one of the houses. She went round and inquired if he could tell her anything about a small gray pony, with a side-saddle on, that had been standing by the road half an hour before. He could not. Edna burst out crying.

"Did you leave the horse there alone?" asked the man.

"No; a person with striped pantaloons and a white felt hat, a stout man smoking a pipe,

offered to take care of him while I went to see a sick woman—that man's wife, I believe."

The sawyer stopped his work, and looked at the girl with real compassion. "Why, miss," said he, "you've put your horse in the hands of Slippery Tim, as we Hardscrabblers calls him. Unless you get somebody on his track right off, you'll never see your horse again."

"Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?" cried Edna.

"Where d'ye live, miss?"

"In Cloverfields—that is, I am visiting there. My uncle's name is Appleby—Mr. Silas Appleby."

"I know," said the man. "All the advice I can give you, young lady, is to walk back as fast as you can, and tell your uncle. He'll know what to do."

"Walk! Oh dear! it's three miles to Cloverfields. With this riding-skirt too!"

"Take it up, can't you? Three miles ain't much for a great, strapping girl like you."

The glance of indignation which Edna cast upon the speaker was altogether thrown away, for the man, with the air of one who could not afford to waste any more valuable time, had resumed his sawing.

There was no help for it, she had either to walk back, or stay where she was until the family at home should grow uneasy and send somebody in search of her. The walk was the pleasanter alternative; so she gathered her long skirt over her arm and started for home. The trees along the road were not pretty now; the air was no longer full of strength; the colour had faded from Edna's cheeks, and the brightness from her heart. She had a fear of being laughed at by her uncle, and sympathized with by her aunt and cousin; and the latter was the more disagreeable. To one accustomed to the smooth pavement of city streets the ups and downs of a country road are very fatiguing; and when at last the white house with its faded stalks of sun-flowers and hollyhocks appeared in view, she was ready to sink to the ground with exhaustion. A glimpse of shirt-sleeves behind the house revealed the fact that Uncle Silas was there at work; and in search of him she went as quickly as her long skirt and aching limbs would allow. She told her sad story very disconnectedly, but the main fact was apparent: the pony had been stolen. Edna need not have feared her uncle's ridicule: he was too much disturbed to think of joking.

“Mr. Armstrong’s Tip, that he lays such store by!” said he. “He wasn’t more than half willing to let me have him; but the pony needed exercise, and I promised to take the greatest care of him. Hm-m-m!” mused Uncle Silas; “this is a pretty how-d’ye-do!” The distressed look on Edna’s face caught his eye, and he said in quite another tone, “Cheer up, my girl; I didn’t mean to trouble you. It was my fault for letting you go among that miserable set. I have heard of that Slippery Tim before, but somehow I never thought of him when your aunt proposed your going there. You go in the house, child—your face is as white as a sheet—and I’ll step over to neighbour Armstrong’s and see what had better be done.”

An hour later and Mr. Appleby opened the kitchen door. “Sh-sh-sh!” whispered his wife, and pointed to the big chair, where, tucked in and screened from the light, reclined poor tired Edna, fast asleep. Several nods and gestures passed between the two, which appeared very satisfactory; and then Mr. Appleby went out again.

Meanwhile, Dolly was in the parlour with her young pupil. Letty sat on the piano-stool

like a queen on her throne, only a great deal happier. The touch of the keys was like the opening of gates into a garden of delights. Dolly placed her hands and bade her strike. She did strike, not once, but a dozen times. How beautiful it was!

"That must be something like the harps of the angels," she said.

Dolly smiled. It was the music in the child's heart interpreting the poor cracked sounds of the old piano into heavenly harmonies. It was easy work to teach Letty, and to witness her pleasure was reward enough. The child had a quick ear, as the blind generally have, and an excellent memory; and with a readiness that astonished Dolly she caught and reproduced any easy tune which was played over for her two or three times.

The young girl's barley loaf was indeed food to this poor blind child. A new meaning had come into her hitherto darkened life; her smile and her voice grew softer; the fits of sullenness of which her aunt complained grew rare; she was becoming obedient and cheerful, more like other children of her age. Of course this change did not take place at once; it was gradual. The visit of the cousins to Clover-

fields was extended to a month, as Mrs. Appleby had desired, and almost half of every day was devoted by Dolly to her pupil. It was not the music alone which so changed Letty Palmer. Dolly was not satisfied with merely teaching her to find sweet harmonies in the piano; she fain would draw harmonies from the little one's soul. After every lesson Letty climbed in her teacher's lap, and listened to some story of the love of Jesus, or learned a little hymn to sing at home when she was lonely or tempted to be cross. She learned to speak of Jesus as other children do of their fathers and mothers. She could not see him, but then she could not see any one; she knew about his love, she had heard his words, she felt his goodness to her; that was enough. It was as if a little dull-looking seed, that had been trampled under foot, had all at once been planted in good soil and warmed by the sun—had felt life stirring within it, and had broken its shell by putting forth one little leaf and then another: it had not grown large enough to attract notice, but it was alive; it was reaching up higher and higher every day. In time it became a healthy plant and bore flowers, the seeds of which were scattered here and there,

and produced in their turn leaves and flowers to adorn the earth. The parable is easy to read. The heart of blind Letty was the seed, and Dolly's was the careful hand which planted and nourished it, and brought it within the reach of the beams of the Sun of righteousness.

Now we turn back to Mrs. Appleby's kitchen. The twilight came on, and the good housewife began bustling about the stove to get a more dainty meal than usual, for Edna's sake. Even the rattling of the dishes as she set the table failed to rouse the sleeping girl, and old Puss, who claimed the cushioned chair as her own property, crept up in her lap and purred away there without awaking her. It was the noise of Uncle Silas's heavy boots, when he came in to see if supper was ready, that finally startled her. She gazed around the room in bewilderment, and then fixed her eyes on his smiling face as he stood by the stove watching her.

Uncle Silas nodded in answer to the unspoken question: "All right, my dear; don't you worry a single minute. I went to ask neighbour Armstrong what had better be done about the pony, and I met him at his own gate, just starting to come and see me. 'Are you

looking for Tip?" said he. 'Yes,' said I; 'how did you know he was lost?' 'He's safe in his own stable this very minute,' said Armstrong, and began laughing at me for letting the pony run away. 'He's tired of visiting,' said he, 'and concluded to come home.' I was surprised enough, as you may be sure, and told just how it had been about your riding to Hardscrabble, and leaving Tip in charge of Slippery Tim. He was astonished, too, for that fellow, he says, is a notorious horse-thief. How Tip got away from him is a marvel."

Edna's face lighted up as she heard of the pony's safety. Nobody ever found out how the animal managed to escape from the thief. The fact was, that Slippery Tim had started off with his prize to a village several miles in the opposite direction from Cloverfields, and had carelessly left him for a moment in front of the public-house while he went in to get a drink. Tip, being a sensible pony, took the opportunity thus afforded for an escape; and when his new master came out of the tavern, with his head not so clear as it had been, Tip was some distance on the road toward his own home, and did not pause until he reached his accustomed stable.

When Edna's nerves had recovered from their shock, and her frame from its unusual fatigue, she had to bear a little kind joking from Uncle Silas about her unsuccessful enterprise.

"I'll never undertake such a thing again as long as I live," she said once and again. "In this country that class of people don't know how to treat their superiors. I don't believe that in England or on the Continent one could find such an ungrateful, impudent set as that at Hardscrabble."

Dolly felt distressed at her cousin's unfortunate experience. She tried to induce her to attempt some other scheme of doing good. "The Lord will accept our efforts," she was wont to say, "even if they do not meet with success."

But Edna was not to be influenced. "It was all nonsense," she said, "this trying to benefit such a thankless set."

Dolly thought of the text that bids us "do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." She did not repeat it to her cousin, however; that would

have been a waste of words, for Edna's motive in offering her so-called barley loaf had no reference at all to such an exhortation and promise.

The cold, dull days of November came and took away all the remaining attractions of Cloverfields scenery. Edna had not dared to ask her uncle to borrow Tip for her use after her adventure, but contented herself with short walks through the village. In-doors all was brightness and cheer. Dolly spent her mornings in the kitchen helping Aunt Faith to make the number of mince and pumpkin pies that Cloverfields house-keepers considered a necessary preparation for the joyful feast close at hand. Dolly had written home, at her aunt's urgent request, begging her parents and Edna's to allow them to remain until after Thanksgiving. The answer came back that Mr. and Mrs. Dexter and Mr. and Mrs. Ravenel could not spare their daughters any longer, and that they must return home at once. Edna was quite ready to go. Cloverfields had proved more endurable than she had anticipated, but, as she frequently said, "it was not to be expected that a person who had travelled so much among the beautiful scenery of Europe should

find much to admire in a common American village."

Dolly, on the other hand, experienced real regret in leaving her wise uncle Silas and warm-hearted aunt Faith; she would miss the pleasant household duties, the sunny kitchen; she was sorry to leave the plain little church and its earnest pastor; perhaps the hardest of all was the parting from her little pet, Letty Palmer.

"Perhaps I'll come back to you next summer, dear," she said the last day of her visit, when Letty, sobbing as if her heart would break, climbed on her teacher's lap for a last Bible-story and talk. "You'll have the music, Letty, for Aunt Faith says you are to come here every day and play on the piano as long as you like. You'll have Jesus too, all the same; don't forget that."

"No," answered the little girl, much comforted. "I'll talk to Jesus about you, and I'll make little songs to sing to him, and ask him to hurry and take us both to heaven, and open my eyes, so that I can see you all the time."

In vain did Dolly tell the child that it was wrong to wish to go until the Lord was ready to take her; Letty clung to her hope of going

to heaven soon, where her eyes would be open and she could look upon her friend—where Jesus lived, and she could hear that glorious music which Dolly had told her was so much finer than Mrs. Appleby's piano, or even the church organ with the choir singing.

The old stage stopped again before Mr. Appleby's door; again the plump little figure of Aunt Faith stood at the gate; there was the friendly chat with the driver and the hearty kisses for the departing guests, messages for the friends at home, and reminders that they were to come next year again, only in the summer, when the country was in its prime, and make a good long visit. Away went the stage on the road to Griggstown, bringing to a close for its two young passengers an era in their lives which neither of them could ever forget.

Edna Ravenel and Dolly Dexter went back to their regular routine of home and school-life—the one to carry out her design of fitting herself to be an accomplished and attractive member of society; the other to learn all that she could, so that she might be qualified, in whatever position awaited her, to benefit others, doing all to the glory of God.

CHAPTER IX.

ELSIE'S VOYAGE.

THE garret of Mrs. John Whitman's house was divided into two parts, one of these being used for stowing away trunks, boxes, and various other things that accumulated from year to year; the other, with its swing suspended from the high rafters, its large baby-house, the admiration of all youthful visitors, its games and dolls scattered about, might be recognized at once as the special property of the children. A charming play-room it certainly was, and many a happy hour had been spent in it by the little Whitmans and their friends. On a certain afternoon in November upon which our story begins the garret looked desolate. The kittens, in a series of pictures hung about, played their pranks as usual; the great wax doll, with real hair and eyes that could open and shut, sat smiling in her pretty rocking-chair; the amusing puzzle

that had been a novelty only the day before lay on the shelf unheeded. Something surely was wrong in the play-room that day.

Three children sat on the floor near the window with their arms about each other; two were crying; while the third, the oldest of the group, gazed steadily out at the weather-vane on the opposite roof, and said not a word. There was a nervous tremble about her mouth once or twice when the little girl beside her became noisy in her grief.

"Hush, Bertha dear," she said at last, wiping away her companion's tears with her own handkerchief. "Aunt Martha will hear you, and that will trouble her very much. You know you promised to be her comfort, and take my place in helping her when I am gone. I shouldn't wonder if it was nearly time to be setting the table for tea. I want you to watch just how I do it, for this will be the last time." The little girl's voice grew husky as she said these words, and she stopped speaking for fear of breaking down altogether.

"Yes, let's go down," said Master Jack, beginning to wipe his eyes vigorously on the sleeve of his jacket. "I'll put out father's slippers and dressing-gown, to be ready when

he comes in, just as Cousin Elsie always does. Bertha, you and I can do everything she did, if we try, and help father and mother so much that they won't miss her at all."

"For shame, Jack!" exclaimed his sister, roused from her distress by an impulse of indignation. "As if we all were going to miss Elsie just on account of such things! We love her so dearly,—that is the reason we can't bear to have her leave us."

"I know it, Bertha," said Elsie soothingly. "Jack is quite right, though, in what he says. If you and he will try to do all the little things that I have done just because I was the oldest, it will please Aunt Martha and Uncle Edward, and they will not miss me so much, though I am sure they will think about me."

The three went down the garret stairs quietly; indeed, Jack's boots, which generally made such a racket that the elders had to clasp their hands to their ears when he descended those particular stairs, were quite noiseless on this occasion. Passing softly by the room where Mrs. Whitman was engaged in packing her niece's trunk, and the parlour too, through whose open door Bertha saw her father and her uncle Joe looking at some instruments that

she knew were used on board ship, the children entered the dining-room, and set to work with an energy that took away their thoughts, for a short time, from their sorrow.

"You're too late this time, Jack, for father's slippers," said Bertha. "He's home already, and has got them for himself. I suppose he came early to-day on account of Uncle Joe; it's the last night, you know."

"There, Bertha, don't! Don't say 'last' anything again: I can't bear it. Oh dear!" and poor Elsie leaned against the mantel and burst into tears.

It was Bertha's turn to comfort now; and so it happened that when Norah appeared at the door to bring in the supper, the table was not set. The two girls went to work in haste, and soon had things ready, though Jack did shout to Bertha that she was letting her tears drop in the cream-pitcher, and Elsie caught herself putting saucers around the table instead of plates.

It is quite time now that the reader should be formally introduced to Elsie and her cousins, and the cause of their sorrow explained. We will leave them, therefore, after the ringing of the supper-bell, to eat the meal with the

rest of the family, while we take a glance backward.

Three months before this November afternoon of which we have spoken Captain Reed had returned from a long sea-voyage, and, going at once to the boarding-house in B—— where he had left his wife and little daughter, received the distressing intelligence that Mrs. Reed had died some weeks previous, and that Mr. and Mrs. Whitman, who had come on from their distant home to take care of her, had taken Elsie back with them immediately after the funeral. This was a shock indeed to the captain, who had cheered himself through many lonely hours out at sea with the hope of a speedy reunion with his family. Letters had been sent to him at several different points, but through some mischance they had failed to reach him; so the blow came suddenly at the very moment when he had expected his long-delayed hope to be realized. He lost no time in starting for New York, where his wife's sister and her husband lived, and where he was to find his poor motherless Elsie.

Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Whitman had grown to look upon their niece as a beloved and necessary member of their family circle,

and to Bertha and Jack their cousin Elsie was alike playmate and adviser—one who could tie up cut fingers as well as mother herself, and yet was not above feeling an interest in jack-straws and Dolly's last new dress. Elsie was blest with a cheerful nature, that did not sink for long at a time under the pressure of misfortune. Her grief at the loss of her mother had been very great; she felt as if she must carry all the rest of her life a soreness in her heart that could not be healed; at times, when she listened to plaintive music or saw other children happy in their mothers' caresses, she felt as if her affliction was more than she had strength to endure. Such times, however, were rare; her smile and happy voice seldom failed to gladden the home-circle to which she now belonged. Best of all—and so what I have left to the last in describing Elsie—she was a true child of God. The graces which made her so dear to her aunt and uncle and cousins grew out of hours of daily communing with her Saviour and diligent study of his will; and the light that shone in her face, her actions, and her words was not her own, but His whose name and service she professed.

When Captain Reed came for a visit to Mr.

Whitman's house, Bertha and Jack would sit for hours on his knees listening to wonderful stories of savage people beyond the sea, of wild beasts and strange fruits, and many adventures of his own, quite as wonderful, Jack thought, as "Robinson Crusoe," although not quite equal in startling incident to his favourite "Gulliver's Travels." But when the captain announced his intention of taking his daughter with him, for company, on his next voyage, all the good impression created by his marvellous tales was lost in a moment, and Bertha and Jack at once pronounced him a cruel and heartless uncle.

"Take Elsie away!" shouted Jack. "Who will rig my ships then, I'd like to know? You can't have her, Uncle Joe—she belongs to us."

"Take Elsie!" echoed Bertha. "She can't go, because she has promised to knit my big doll a pair of stockings, and to teach me to embroider a sofa-cushion for mother's birthday; and Elsie always keeps her promises, Uncle Joe." Bertha's tone was triumphant; there could be nothing said after that, she was sure.

"Do you really think it wise, brother Joe,

to take such a child on a long voyage?" This was Mrs. Whitman's question, and put with more moderation than the excited children had used.

"Don't you let him, mother; don't let him take our Elsie," cried Jack, who climbed on the back of his mother's chair, and shouted with the entire force of his lungs in her ear, to enforce his petition.

In spite of all that could be said, Captain Reed kept to his decision. He believed that sea-air would be the best thing in the world for his little girl; they would be company for each other, he said; and as for study, if that was what they were thinking of, Elsie could take her books along and study twelve hours a day if she liked. "No interruptions out in mid-ocean," said the captain, "such as you land's people have. Six months on board ship are worth two years on shore for a chance to study."

Of course the captain carried his point—first because, being Elsie's father, he had a right to his own way about her; and secondly, because, as the aunt and uncle had to agree, there was truth in the argument about sea-air being beneficial to the little girl's health.

From the time the question of Elsie's voyage had been decided to the day upon which the bark "Speed" was advertised to sail, Mr. Whitman's house was the scene of unusual commotion. There was shopping to be done; for every one knows that a long voyage requires a provision of clothing for all sorts of weather, and many changes too, since there are no weekly washing days on shipboard. The dress-maker was there, calling Elsie much oftener than her cousins liked to be fitted and to try on garments; and the good aunt accomplished wonders each day at the sewing-machine. The neighbours kept dropping in, too, to talk over the matter, and to express their surprise that Captain Reed should think of such a thing as taking a child like Elsie off alone to foreign countries. There was an old lady who made a call every morning, "just to see how things were getting on," she said, but in reality to the great hindrance of the work on hand.

"Now, tell me, sis, once for all, where is your pa going to take you?" This was asked while the visitor held Elsie at arm's length and surveyed her from head to foot.

"I forget the names of the different places where we are to stop, Mrs. Brewer, though

father has told me several times ; but they are all on the west coast of Africa. The 'Speed' is a trading vessel."

"The west coast of Africa! a trading vessel! Well, that does beat me!" exclaimed Mrs. Brewer, suddenly letting go Elsie's hands. "Your father's a slave-trader, then!"

Elsie's colour rose, but she felt unable to answer such a grave charge properly, and looked imploringly at her aunt. Mrs. Whitman turned from the sewing-machine with a hearty laugh: "Why, Mrs. Brewer, there are other things bought and sold in Africa besides the natives. Does my brother-in-law look like a slave-dealer?"

The old lady shook her head, and looked very severe. She presently took her departure. Elsie accompanied her to the door, and her last words were, "You poor child! The west coast of Africa, eh? and a trader?"

The next day the call was repeated, and about the same conversation gone through. To the very last, Mrs. Brewer insisted on believing—nor did she keep her thoughts to herself—that Captain Reed was about to take his little daughter away with him on a slave-catching expedition.

When the "Speed" was in order for the voyage, Captain Reed delighted the children by offering to take them all on board to see Elsie's home. Jack and Bertha had never before been on a vessel, and their questions about this thing and that were very amusing. To Elsie it was no novelty. When quite a little child she had been with her father on a trip to the West Indies. Her mother was with her then, and everything was oh so different! There were tears in her eyes as she stood on the "Speed's" deck watching the noisy work of the men below, who were busily taking in freight. Fortunately, the rest of the party were too much occupied to notice them.

"What a funny dining-room you've got, Uncle Joe!" exclaimed Bertha. "The table is fastened to the floor, I do believe;" and she tried with all the strength of her small hands to move it, the result of which was that she fell backward and bumped her head, and got laughed at besides. She was up again in a moment, and ready with more observations: "I never saw tumblers set in a shelf with holes, and hung from the ceiling, like that. Why don't you have a china closet to keep your dishes in, and do things properly?" ques-

tioned the young lady with the air of one having superior knowledge.

Bertha and Jack listened with astonishment to the captain's explanation of these singular arrangements: "When there is what sailors call a stiff breeze blowing, and the vessel rolls this way and that, my tumblers would stand a poor chance if they were on a shelf in a china closet like your mother's. The table would dance about too if it was on castors, like that in your dining-room; and the beds would be worse than cradles out at sea if made according to land fashions. You have not seen our bedrooms, have you?—we call them state-rooms. Come, I will show you the one Elsie is to have. By the way, where is Elsie?"

"Here she comes," cried Jack. "Cousin Elsie, come quick; don't you want to see your bed-room?"

Bertha was the first to peep into the tiny apartment. "Oh my!" she exclaimed, "what a funny bed! It's just like a broad shelf; you'll fall out some night and break your nose, see if you don't."

Everybody laughed at Bertha's prophecy, and then Jack drew their attention to the washstand: "Every single thing is fastened to

the wall. I should not like it one bit, Uncle Joe," said he.

"I suppose not, Master Jack," replied the captain. "You could not make a train of cars with my chairs, as you do at home."

"Nor pile things on the table to climb on, as he does when he wants to get something that mother has put out of his way," added Bertha.

The conversation was becoming too personal to please Jack, so he started off toward the deck, and the rest, having nothing else to do, followed.

"I'd like to be a sailor," said the little boy. "It must be good fun to run up to the top of everything, the way that fellow is doing."

"Not so fine, Jack, as you think," the captain replied gravely; "a sailor's life has more hard work in it than fun. But come, if you have seen all that you want to, we must be going home."

The children lingered to take another glimpse at Elsie's room. "It's very nice," said Bertha. "I shall know just how things look around you when you are so far away, Elsie, and I can tell mother about it."

The last day came—we have already spoken

about that—the trunk was packed, and a box besides, containing Elsie's work-basket well stocked with materials for keeping her own and her father's clothes in order; her new writing-case, a present from Uncle Edward; the blank book in which she was to write an account of her voyage; her school-books too, and a few treasured volumes besides. There were other articles in the box that Elsie knew nothing of, for her aunt and cousins had planned more than one pleasant surprise for her when she should open it far away from them all. More than once little Jack was on the point of letting out the secret that there was a photograph album there, bought with the money from his own bank, with pictures of all the family; but somebody always checked him in time.

It was sorrowful work, the parting from the dear friends who had been so kind to Elsie in her sorrow. She wondered if she should ever come back to them, and if they would continue to love her, as they certainly did then. The whole family accompanied Captain Reed and Elsie to the wharf where the "Speed" was awaiting them, and went on board to cheer the little girl until the signal was given for them

to leave. As the vessel slowly moved from the shore Elsie stood on deck waving her handkerchief to the group of dear ones separated from her by a constantly widening strip of water; and when she could distinguish them no longer she went to her queer little room, shut herself in, and gave way to the tears she could no longer restrain. There she remained until it grew quite dark; nobody came to speak to her, for Captain Reed had not a moment to spare, so busy was he getting everything under way for the voyage. There was no cabin-passenger but herself, and Elsie did not know until next day that there were some emigrants in the steerage; even if she had known, that fact would have given her little comfort.

Finally, she bathed her swollen eyes at the wash-stand that had amused Jack, and then opened the small round window and looked out. Nothing was there to be seen but sky above and water below, for while Elsie had been crying the vessel, helped on by a favouring wind, had made its way far beyond sight of land. An overwhelming thought of her loneliness came to Elsie's heart as she gazed, but immediately God sent her a remembrance of his presence, and she sang softly, and with

a new, comforting application, the familiar words—

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said—
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”

As she sung one verse after another the sense of loneliness vanished, and there was a glad ring in her voice when she repeated the cheering assurance of the last verse:

“That soul, though all hell shall endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.”

The captain appeared at the door just as Elsie sung the closing words. She did not hear him, for her face was toward the window, and the wind, blowing freshly across it, prevented her from heeding any other sound.

“Come, little daughter,” said the captain, “put your shawl on and we will have a walk on deck before tea. You have not learned the way about your new home yet.”

Elsie quickly took her warm shawl from the hook on which she had hung it, and tying on the pretty hood her aunt had knit for her, she put her hand in her father's, and together they mounted the steep staircase.

"When is tea-time on board ship?" she inquired:

"At four bells exactly."

"How funny!" said Elsie. "What do you mean by four bells, father?"

Captain Reed then explained to her the manner of dividing time on board ship, and told her that she would soon learn to know the hour of the day by the number of bell-strokes as well she had done at home by her aunt's clock.

Up and down the deck they walked, and Elsie was beginning to think that life at sea was a very pleasant thing after all, when a sudden faintness came over her and her footsteps became unsteady. The captain glanced at her pale face and smiled; he knew what was the matter; he had been sea-sick himself on his first voyage. Very gently he lifted her in his arms, and took her to the state-room where an hour before he had found her singing. There was no more singing for that night, and Elsie found, when she was left alone, that the best thing she could do was to follow her father's advice and go to bed at once. Aunt Martha had thoughtfully placed on the very top of the trunk the things Elsie would first need. It

was well she did, for in this first attack of sea-sickness the child felt unable to do much at unpacking.

“Oh dear! oh dear!” moaned poor Elsie; “I must be going to die, and here I am all alone by myself!” It was not a cheering thought, and many an older person would have met it even less bravely. Elsie had found her little Bible placed among the necessary articles in the trunk-top, and when she was all ready to get in bed she opened it at the Psalms, and tried to read by the light of the brass lamp that was fastened, like everything else, to the wall. The effort only made her more sick, and utterly discouraged she crept into bed, hid her face in the pillow, and began to cry.

“Hoity toity! what is all this?” called out the captain shortly after. “See, Elsie, here is a good cup of tea and some bread and butter. It is not good for you to eat much to-night, but try and drink the tea, to please me.”

Elsie would fain have refused, but she could not when the request was put in that form; so, leaning against her father's shoulder, she tried her best to eat a mouthful of bread and swallow the tea.

“That is a good girl. Now, what is there I

can do for you before I go on deck?" asked the captain.

"Nothing at all, father, thank you, unless—" and the child hesitated.

"Out with it! Whatever is on board the 'Speed' is at your service, little girl; don't be afraid to ask."

"It wasn't anything, thank you, sir; only I could not read in the Bible for myself, and if you would please read me a psalm, I should be so glad."

The captain took the book from Elsie's hand, wishing her request had been of another sort, since Bible-reading was not, by any means, his regular habit; but he did not want his child to know how far from the kingdom of heaven he was. "Which psalm will you have, my dear?"

"Any one, father," answered poor Elsie, feeling too miserable to choose. "I would like to hear your favourite."

The captain turned over the leaves much perplexed, and guided by a bit of blue ribbon, evidently used as a marker, he came to the nineteenth psalm, and read it through. When he had finished he took a step toward the bed to get a good-night kiss, but Elsie was asleep; her troubles were over, for one day at least.

Just as the sound of six bells next morning announced that breakfast was ready in the cabin, Elsie opened her door, looking as fresh and bright as if she never had experienced a touch of sea-sickness. The captain and mate presently appeared, and the three sat down at one end of the long table.

"You'll make a first-rate sailor, after all," said Captain Reed when Elsie passed her plate for a second supply of meat. "What work have you laid out for yourself to-day?"

"First, I want to unpack my trunk and box, so as to know just where my things are."

"I will have them brought in here, then, immediately after breakfast, and open them for you," was the captain's ready offer.

It was a wise decision on Elsie's part to go to work at once, for thus she would have no leisure for home-sickness. The unpacking and replacing her possessions was a work of time, and of much interest. The unexpected gifts that were hidden in the box delighted her greatly, and she ran up and down many times that morning to show her father some new treasure. At the bottom of the box she found a bundle of tracts and two or three cheap Bibles. "I wonder what Aunt Martha meant

me to do with these?" she said to herself. "There is nobody here to give tracts to." The last thing of all to be taken out was a Sunday-school paper. Elsie spread it out on the floor to look at the pictures, and in doing so she noticed that a piece of poetry was marked. She read it carefully through; it was one of Aunt Martha's last thoughts toward her, and she would prize it on that account. It was about "Barley Loaves."

"I don't see," mused the child, "how I am to do good to anybody, shut up here in this vessel for nobody knows how long." Elsie put the other things back in the box, and moved it to a safe corner of her room; then with the paper in her hand she went on deck to seek her father, and ask his help in making an application of the verses, so certain she was that her aunt had meant her to put the advice they contained into practice. Captain Reed was busy, so Elsie had to sit down and await his leisure. The morning was fine, and the ship was going on its way bravely. It was delightful to look far off to the point where sea and sky met, to feel the fresh breeze that was wafting her along, and think that she was to move on and on, just like this, for weeks yet.

There was no sea-sickness in the case, or the anticipation would have been far less agreeable. Elsie's thoughts were interrupted, all at once, by a hearty "yah-ha!" from what direction she could not tell. The laugh was repeated, and this time she found that it came from what she afterward learned was the steerage. She walked along to the edge of the gangway, and, looking down, saw, to her great surprise, a group of coloured people huddled together in a very small space. Two men were leaning over the side of the vessel, and it was one of these whose noisy laugh had attracted her.

"Must ha' been a mighty lot o' salt thrown in dis yere water some time," was the remark she overheard as she drew near. It was evident, from the grimace on the face of the older man, that he had just swallowed some seawater, in ignorance of its quality.

Captain Reed had finished his work, and now came and stood beside his little daughter: "What! listening to the steerage passengers! Maybe it would amuse you to go down and speak to them; if so, I will go with you."

"Not now, father, please. I should like to hear about them. Who are they? where are

they going? and how did they come on board your vessel?"

The captain laughed: "You are a perfect Yankee for questions, Elsie; but come here and sit down, and I will tell you what I can about these people."

When they were seated, he said: "You know, dear, that there is a narrow strip of country on the west coast of Africa called Liberia."

"Yes, sir," was the ready answer: "that is where the negroes that are freed in the South sometimes go. Liberia is a country of coloured people, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is a republic, carried on by those who once were slaves."

Elsie's thoughts at the mention of the word "slaves" reverted to the horrified Mrs. Brewer, and she wondered if she still thought her father to be a slave-dealer.

"These people in the steerage are a couple of families from Georgia, recently liberated. We have very little room on the 'Speed,' as you see, for their accommodation, but they were so anxious to reach the land of freedom that the owners of the vessel consented to take them as passengers; it won't put us out of our course at all to let them off at Monrovia, for I

want to stop thereabout to take in some palm oil."

At another time Elsie would have inquired what was meant by palm oil, for she was really an inquisitive little person, or, as her father had said, "a perfect Yankee;" but now she was too much interested in hearing about her fellow-passengers to be willing to change the subject. It disturbed her not a little that her father should be called off before she had gained any more information about them. When he left her, she wandered again to the spot where she could overlook the steerage. There were five children there of various ages, all with woolly heads and bright black eyes. They were engaged in playing a merry game just then, which consisted of running and jumping and tumbling over each other like a parcel of kittens.

The striking of eight bells, the signal for dinner, called Elsie away from her post of observation, and afterward she did not go on deck immediately. The thought came to her, in connection with the poem her aunt had marked, could she not offer the Saviour a barley loaf by teaching these children, just out of bondage, the blessed truths of that gospel that

should make them free indeed? If she could get them to be quiet for an hour or two every morning, would it not be possible to teach them to read by the time they reached Monrovia? Her father had said that it would certainly take a month to get across, and then she knew he meant to go farther down the coast first, to get a load of dyewood, before going to Monrovia; and that would take some time longer. Elsie's face grew radiant as she thought the matter over, and then in her state-room she committed this, as she did everything concerning herself, to the direction of God, asking that if he pleased to make her of use in this manner to the poor little children he would make the way plain before her, and thus show that her offering was accepted.

The next morning Elsie was early on deck, but the captain was there before her. She found him looking at the children in the steerage, just in the place she had stationed herself the day before. He came forward smiling to get a kiss, and told her, as he had told her already several times, what a comfort it was to have her with him on this voyage. Whatever regretful thoughts had found their way to the little girl's mind as she remembered home and its

attractions were driven away utterly by such words from her father's lips.

"What frolicsome monkeys those are below there!" said the captain, nodding his head toward the steerage.

"Yes, father. I want you to take me down to see them, as you promised."

"By and by I will. I was thinking, just as you came up, that if time hung too heavy on your hands, dear, it might amuse you to start a school there, and teach the youngsters their A B C's. What do you say to it?"

"I was thinking of that very thing," was Elsie's joyful answer; "I am glad to find you are willing. When may I begin, father?"

"Whenever you please, or rather whenever you can catch your pupils, for they look wild enough to give you some trouble."

A few hours after this Captain Reed took his daughter to the steerage, and introduced her to its occupants. The elders of the party were very polite to "little missy," as they called her; and when they heard that she was going to teach their children, their gratitude was unbounded. At Elsie's request the mothers called the little ones to her.

"You Plutarch and Apollo, come hyar dis

minute ; bring Penelope 'long too," sang out one of the women, while the other, by a motion of her hand, encouraged two shy girls to approach, whom she introduced to their new friend as Rosetta and Blanche. "Right smart gals too," said the proud mother, "if you keep a good lookout for 'em. Chil'n," she continued, intent on having her daughters make a good impression, "whar's your manners?" Instantly the captain and Elsie were honoured by a bobbing of heads and bending of knees from all five, supposed to constitute *manners*. Elsie smiled. This was taken as a good omen, and produced a general rolling of eyes and display of teeth in response.

"Youngsters," said the captain, "Miss Elsie is kind enough to propose teaching you for an hour or so every day during the voyage. Will you be good and do just as she tells you?"

"Yes, sa'ar," was the prompt response, and the five woolly heads bobbed again.

"I'll tend to their 'haviour, cap'n," said one of the men, coming forward, and shaking his head at Plutarch by way of warning.

"Where will you have your school, my dear?" inquired the captain.

"Down here, if you are willing, father, for," added Elsie, in a low voice, "they are shy things, and maybe feel more at home here."

The captain smiled, and went off to get her a chair, and presently she was left alone, with her five pupils standing in a row before her. Elsie had some doubt as to what branch of education she should take up first, but she concluded to begin by proving their religious knowledge.

"Tell me," she said, addressing the tallest boy, "who made you."

The boy rolled his eyes till only the whites were visible, but made no answer.

"Dat ar Plutarch don't know nuffin ; I reckon 'Pollo there can answer."

Elsie looked around in surprise, and saw the man who had volunteered to keep order stationed at the back of her chair as a self-appointed assistant. This was Plutarch's father.

"Can you tell me, then?" said Elsie, looking at Apollo.

"God made me," was the satisfactory answer.

"And what did Jesus Christ do? Blanche, you can answer that."

Blanche shook her head.

"Rosetta, then."

"Jesus died on the cross," replied Rosetta, giving her sister a triumphant nudge.

"What did he die for, Penelope?"

Penelope could not tell.

"Can any one answer that question?"

Apollo, who was evidently the best informed of the class, replied, "I reckon 'twas to save folks."

The assistant teacher gave an approving chuckle: "Dat ar 'Pollo is a mighty peart fellow; he's been to camp-meetin' lots o' times, and can talk mos' as good as a preacher."

Elsie wanted an opportunity of impressing the great truth of Christ's dying to take away the sins of these very children; she wanted to make them feel about it just as she herself did. It was a great hindrance to her power of speaking from her heart to have that man standing behind her chair, hearing every word. But this was only the first of many chances she hoped to have for doing the same thing, so she dropped the subject, and produced a gay-coloured primer that she had found among the tracts. She opened it, and pointed to the first letter: "Who can tell me what that is."

"Dunno, missus," said Plutarch, while Rosetta yawned aloud, and little Penelope ran

away to her mother. Apollo scratched his head, and after gazing at the book for a full minute replied, "Dat ar's a picture."

The young teacher then went to work in earnest, and at the end of half an hour had the pleasure of hearing three of the class repeat the alphabet as far as "D."

"Now I'll teach you a hymn, and that will close school for to-day."

Captain Reed's attention was soon after attracted by strange sounds from the steerage; and coming near enough, he heard Elsie's sweet voice singing,

"I want to be an angel,
And with the angels stand,
A crown upon my forehead,
A harp within my hand,"

and five distinct and very discordant attempts to follow her on the part of her scholars.

"A pretty picture it makes," thought Captain Reed as he gazed on Elsie's earnest face and the strange little figures around her, the older emigrants at a respectful distance—for even the assistant had abandoned his post now—all listening with serious attention to the hymn. He thought too of Elsie's mother,

and wondered if she was permitted to look down and see her child's Christian work. If so, she could see him too; and somehow the thought of his wife's eyes gazing upon him, searching out perhaps the secrets of his heart, was not a comfortable one, and he hastened to put it aside. He caught up an old newspaper and began reading the advertisements of a date six months previous; this had the desired effect.

"Oh, father," exclaimed Elsie, who had come on deck unperceived, "there is nothing to read in that old paper. I'll give you one of my tracts. There! that is a lovely one; I am sure you will like it." The child made a selection as she spoke, and put the paper in her father's hand.

"What were you doing with the rest, my dear?"

"Why, father," said Elsie, laughing, "I took them to the steerage to give to Joseph and Katy, Sarah and Uncle Solomon; those are the grown-up folks, you know. They all thanked me as nice as could be; but I saw Joseph, who pretends to know so much, looking at his upside down, and then I found that not one of them could read."

The captain laughed: "Your good intentions were all thrown away, then, little daughter?"

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed the little girl. "They begged me to go down and read to them this afternoon, and I promised I would—that is, if you have no objections."

"None at all, my little missionary," said her father, smiling at her still, but with something very like tears in his eyes. Elsie ran off to her room, but in a few minutes returned with her work-basket, and took a seat near her father.

"What have you there?" he inquired as he caught a glimpse of knitting-needles and some balls of yarn.

"Socks for you," was the answer. "Aunt Martha taught me to knit last winter, and I begged her to put these in my trunk, so that I might be doing something useful."

Thus began Elsie's life on shipboard. The days passed by, too well filled with duties to leave any time for sorrowful thoughts. When she got things regulated, she had certain hours for her own studies, others for needlework; the keeping of her journal also required time; and these, with school in the morning and

reading aloud to the steerage passengers, kept her fully occupied. The children did not make very rapid progress in reading, but they loved to sing, and were never tired of hearing Bible-stories. Elsie hoped and prayed that some good seeds would find their way to those ignorant hearts and take root there.

At twilight it was the custom of the older negroes to get together and sing their plantation-songs. These were a source of amusement to Elsie, who had never heard the like before. More singular still were their hymns, many of them taking in long passages of Old Testament history, recited in a sort of chant by Joseph, while the rest joined in a chorus. The captain suggested that as they could not read this was a very good way for them to keep the Scripture in mind. When their parents ceased, the children, perched in all sorts of queer places, where they could be seen by the "white folks," who were as much interested as themselves, took their turn at singing.

"I wants to be one angel"

was always first on the list, followed by

"Around the throne of God in heaven,"

and others, just in the order in which they had been taught.

"If ever those children get to heaven," said the captain one evening when he had been listening to their songs, "you will have had something to do with it."

Elsie's heart gave a great bound at these words, and she sent up a little prayer that God would let it be so. Did he really accept her efforts as a barley loaf? she wondered.

It was not only in the steerage that Elsie's tracts were welcomed and her own influence felt. The sailors, the rough, strange-looking men, of whom she felt afraid the first days of the voyage, gradually coaxed her into friendship by carving odd little toys for her and telling her of their own families at home. One of them had a little girl, he said, just as big as herself, and another had a boy who could sing the very same tunes she taught in the steerage. Dutch Peter made bold to ask her at last if she could not spare him one of her little books. He backed his request by saying that when a boy he was thought to be a great scholar, and never missed his Bible chapter on a Sunday. Elsie inquired why he gave up such a good habit, and was told that Peter had lost his Bible

on a previous voyage, and had not taken the trouble to replace it; but that if ever he reached a civilized country again he meant to get one. Elsie ran and brought one of the Bibles with which her aunt's forethought had provided her. "Promise me," she said, "that you will read a few verses in it every day, and I will give it to you." Peter readily promised, and, what is more, he kept his word.

Often after that the captain paused in his walk, astonished at hearing familiar bits of Scripture spelled out by Dutch Peter, while his comrades listened as respectfully as they would have done in a church on shore.

In due time the joyful news was shouted on board the "Speed" that the coast of Africa was in sight. The voyage had been a favourable one, without storm or detention of any sort. Captain Reed shouted at his daughter's door one morning that she must hurry and dress and come on deck, for they had cast anchor off Bassa, and he wanted to hear her first impression of Africa and the natives. Elsie did not linger long over her toilet; it was easy to dress now that the vessel was quiet. She hastened to the deck. Oh what a tumult there was! The captain was surrounded by a group of

strange-looking people who had come from shore in their canoes as soon as the "Speed" had cast anchor. They wore very little clothing except beads and paint, and were jabbering away with so much noise and such fierce gestures that Elsie thought they were angry with her father and meant to fight him. With this idea she ran through the crowd and threw her arms around him as a defence. At this everybody laughed, and the captain, taking her in his arms, explained that the natives were only making a bargain with him about some dyewood that he wanted to purchase, and that, because they could not talk English very well, they made up the deficiency by noise.

It proved a very exciting day to Elsie. In the first place, there was the beautiful shore to gaze upon. Here, in the middle of winter, the air was warm and the trees clothed with foliage. The words of the hymn came to her mind:

"Bright fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green."

Could the Land of Promise have appeared any more lovely to the Jews of old, after their long journey through the wilderness, than the shore of Africa did to-day to the little girl who, leav-

ing bare trees and cold winds behind her, had crossed the ocean to get a sight of all this beauty?

The most important part of the day's trading, to Elsie's mind, was the purchase of a beautiful gray parrot with scarlet-tipped wings. Dutch Peter bought the bird of a native boy, and presented it to her with quite a long speech. Elsie named the bird "Jack," in honour of her little cousin, and determined, in addition to her other undertakings, to teach it to talk.

A few days more passed, and the "Speed," worthy of its name, reached Monrovia. Here the parting must take place between Elsie and her scholars.

"You must not forget me," she said when they were preparing to go ashore. They all were ready with promises that they never would; and Apollo declared that when he became president of Liberia he would send her a bag of gold and a barrel of oranges.

At last the business for which the "Speed" had crossed the ocean was accomplished. Loads of dyewood, casks of palm oil, and tusks of ivory were stored away in the hold, while stores of provisions taken on board promised to make an agreeable variety to the salt beef and "hard

tack" which had formed their principal bill of fare for some time. There were great bunches of bananas, baskets of oranges, sweet potatoes, yams, and cassava, and I know not how many more dainties, some of which Elsie had never even heard of. Her duties were increased by the care not only of Jack the parrot, but of a droll little monkey, which her father purchased as a gift for Bertha. These pets became very tame, and their tricks afforded all on board plenty of amusement.

They had all sorts of weather on the return voyage. A pretty severe squall came up one night when the vessel was not many miles from the African coast. The captain tapped at Elsie's door and inquired if she was frightened.

"Not much," she answered, cheerily, "for I have been asking God to take care of us, and so he will."

"Pray for me too, little daughter," said the captain, and went away.

Elsie did not need to be asked. Not a prayer passed her lips that did not contain a petition for her dear father.

The voyage was nearly accomplished, and pleasant anticipations of home began to fill the little girl's heart. What would Jack say to

his parrot, and Bertha to her monkey? What would Aunt Martha think of the rosy cheeks the wholesome sea-air had given her, and all the needlework she had accomplished? Would old Mrs. Brewer be convinced that her father had not been enriching himself by the slave-trade? How pleasant it would be to join the dear home-circle again, to hear what they had been doing all these months, and to tell them of the strange scenes she had witnessed!

Elsie had taken her little Bible on deck one afternoon, meaning to read. She opened at the eighty-ninth Psalm; the first sentence is, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever." At these words she stopped, and repeated them softly to herself, to make them her very own heart-utterance. God's mercies to her! She must see how many of them she could count up. This effort suggested one thought of home after another, all full of the Lord's loving-kindness. The Bible dropped in her lap; and leaning on the taffrail, with her gaze fixed on the distant horizon, Elsie fell into a pleasant reverie, having its foundation in that single Scripture text. The captain had been pacing the deck, watching, as he passed to and fro, the changing expressions on his daughter's face.

He loved to watch her when she was thus unconscious of his presence, trying to read in the play of her features the thoughts of her heart. How precious she was to him now, this only daughter! Since her mother had been taken it seemed as if the love once divided between them had all settled upon her. He drew near to the spot where Elsie sat; he picked up the Bible that had fallen from her lap; her dream was so deep that she was not aware of the act. At last he placed one hand on her arm and uttered her name. The sound and motion brought her back as if from a long journey; she started and blushed.

"Your thoughts were very pleasant ones, dear," the father said; "won't you tell them to me so I can be glad too?"

Elsie took the Bible from his hand, found her place again, and pointing to the verse she had read she said: "Those were the words that set me thinking."

The captain read them slowly, and then said, "I too should be glad to be able to sing of God's mercy. You must teach me, child."

"Teach you, father!" murmured Elsie. "Why, I suppose every one that is a Christian can do that."

“Well, then,” said the father, with a tremulousness in his voice, “tell me how is one to set about being a Christian?”

The child’s eyes were full of wonder; Elsie had never doubted her father’s being a Christian. “It is”—she hesitated—“it is to have one’s heart all changed by God’s Spirit, so that one tries to do his will as it is done in heaven. I can’t explain such things,” she said, gently, “but the New Testament is full of it. If you would take my Bible, father, I am sure it would help you. It was mother’s Bible; you see her name is in it, and all the marked passages are hers; I have not added one. I think they are just the ones that you want.”

Almost before she had ceased speaking, her father had taken the book and was gone.

Elsie leaned again on the taffrail and gazed far out on the sea, but she did not lose herself in reverie again. New thoughts about her father, new hopes for him, occupied her mind. Was he really just beginning to set about being a Christian? How very strange! Was it, could it be, in answer to her constant prayers for him?

Day after day went by, and Captain Reed did not return Elsie’s Bible; and as he did

not say anything about it, she did not like to ask him. She had one Testament left of those her aunt had put in her trunk for distribution, and with this she had to content herself. If it had been any other than her mother's Bible, she would not have minded, but her father was a very careless man, Elsie thought, and what if he should lose it? The anxiety came to an end, and a great joy took its place, when, two or three mornings after, Captain Reed called all his men together, and announced to them his intention of beginning that and every day for the remainder of the voyage with prayer for God's blessing. He read a short passage from the little Bible; then, with his strange family-group kneeling around him, he prayed so earnestly and simply that every heart was touched. He thanked God for the great light that had dawned upon his soul, and entreated that every one of his crew might also be brought to the knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ.

That prayer was one long remembered on board the "Speed," and years afterward the story of the captain's conversion was related by these to other sailors with a fervour that proved the effect it had produced upon themselves.

It was a joyful day when the "Speed" cast anchor again in New York harbour. Elsie had been looking forward to it with great eagerness. A week before she had begun packing her trunk, and had decided what dress and what ribbon to wear to go ashore in. Yet, in spite of this natural delight at the return, there was in her heart a deep attachment to the vessel, each corner of which was familiar to her, while her own little room and her favourite seat on deck had all the feeling of home. Her parrot had grown so tame that he would perch himself on his mistress's shoulder while she sat at her sewing or studies. He had learned a good many funny speeches by this time, for the sailors had taken pains with his education. Elsie was sure that he understood that the end of the voyage was near, for he caught up her chance words, and took to screaming, "Where is Master Jack? I want Master Jack!" The monkey too had become attached to Elsie, and would nestle beside her, his comical grave face turned up to hers as if he understood all that was going on.

What rejoicing there was in the Whitman family when a carriage drove up to the door of their house with Elsie's trunk and box

strapped on behind ! Jack was the first to see it, for he happened to be standing at the parlour window. "Hallo, Bertha, mother, everybody !" he shouted ; "here's Uncle Joe and Elsie ! I know it is, for there is a monkey in a red coat looking out of the carriage."

There was a general rush down the stairs and out of the door.

"Where is Master Jack ? I want Master Jack !" said a singular voice.

"Here I am," the owner of the name called out. "Seems to me Uncle Joe has brought home a couple of natives."

The story is headed "Elsie's Voyage," and now that it is over, and she is safely home again, I suppose we ought to leave her. There are, however, two or three more things to tell before we close.

Captain Reed hastened to unite himself with that body of Christians to which his wife had belonged, and on every succeeding voyage he laboured faithfully among his sailors to bring them to Christ. He became known as the "praying captain." The little old Bible was never absent from his pocket, and it was referred to whenever he or his men were in need of counsel and comfort.

Elsie remained with her aunt and uncle Whitman for several years, being unto them as a daughter, and to Bertha an elder sister. She once received a letter from her former pupil, Apollo Jones, in which he thanked her for the lessons he had received on shipboard, saying that he had since been to school, and had become clerk in a prosperous business-house, and that the rest of his family were doing well. He and Plutarch were both professors of religion. Apollo did not say anything about his prospect of becoming president of Liberia, nor mention the bag of gold and barrel of oranges he had promised to send her. Better than gold or oranges, to his teacher, was the knowledge that he had gained a position so much higher than that of president—namely, that of a servant of Christ and a child of God.

Elsie Reed's barley loaves had been accepted, and year by year were being multiplied by His power who is able to work miracles out of the smallest and poorest offerings his people make. No doubt many souls hereafter, looking back to the influences which through God's blessing helped them on their way to the kingdom, will remember with special thanksgiving Elsie's voyage.

CHAPTER X.

JERRY OGDEN.

THE Rev. Ambrose Pulsifer, D. D., sat in his study. His smooth bald head rested upon the velvet-cushioned back of his chair, as it was wont to do every morning of the year except Sundays between the hours of nine and twelve. Indeed, the chair had become a witness of its owner's habit, by showing a well-worn hollow high on the cushion, just where the head came, reminding one of the velvet-lined cases to be seen in jewellers' windows, whose indentations make known the exact form of the articles for which they are designed. The table beside which Dr. Pulsifer sat was loaded with papers and books; there were reports of benevolent societies, catalogues of schools, appeals for aid in behalf of this and that good enterprise; there were periodicals, religious and secular; there were commentaries and lexicons, some piled up in the background

as if waiting their turn at being useful to their possessor, and others lying open, showing pages of Greek and Latin, or else of English so grand and scholarly that children and common folks would certainly have failed to recognize their mother tongue. In front of all stood an ink-stand with a sheet of sermon-paper at its side. On this last was written in distinct and legible style the text which the reverend doctor had chosen for his Sunday-morning discourse. With his chair pushed a little back from the table, and his head comfortably adjusted in its accustomed hollow, as I have already said, sat Dr. Ambrose Pulsifer himself, deep in meditation. His eyes were closed, in order to shut out all worldly objects, and with one hand he was unconsciously picking out, one after another, hairs from the scanty stock in his glistening head. He always did this when he was engaged in thought; thus every sermon cost him as many hairs as ideas—perhaps more. The subject under consideration on this particular occasion was the Babylonish captivity, and he had resolved to build on this theme a most eloquent discourse.

While the doctor was getting the words of his introductory sentence properly arranged in

his mind, a slight noise caused him to start and open his eyes. Was it a knock at the study-door? It sounded so, but he hoped he was mistaken; perhaps it was a mouse in the wall. He closed his eyes again, and repeated to himself the rolling syllables of that opening sentence. Before he had reached the last word the noise once more disturbed him. This time he opened his eyes wide and sat upright in his chair; it was, beyond a doubt, a knock at the door; somebody was about to interrupt him, it was evident.

"Come in!" called the doctor, in a loud voice that had not an accent of welcome in it.

In reply to the unwilling permission a young girl entered: "Oh, grandpa, I thought I would find you here, in the midst of your musty, fusty old books."

Gertrude Pulsifer was not afraid of the dignified doctor, nor at all abashed by the frown on his face, which said as plainly as so many words that he was exceedingly annoyed at her coming just when he was busy with that opening sentence of his sermon, which now might be lost for ever!

In between him and the commentaries came a mass of bright curls, and Miss Gertrude

jumped, with all the freedom of a pet kitten, upon her grandfather's lap.

"Oh how shiny your head is, Grandpa Pulsifer! I do believe when the painters were at work you had them put a coat of china-gloss on it, to match the wall. You've been picking out hairs too—as many as a dozen, I do believe. Just let me count and see. Yes, you must have been thinking very hard this morning, for there are fully a dozen missing on this side."

"Saucy child! There! run away. I am very busy, and you are seriously interrupting me. You know I never allow any one in this room between nine and twelve o'clock, unless upon urgent business."

"Well, but I came on very urgent business: indeed I did," persisted Gertrude with a pretence of seriousness.

"Let me hear it then as quickly as possible, for time is precious." The smile which accompanied the words was a grim one, but still it was a smile,—for he already repented of his ungracious words,—and therefore encouraging.

Gertrude again seated herself on the old gentleman's knee, from which she had been quietly slipping, and produced a paper from her

pocket. "There's a dear little poem in this," she said. "Did you read it, grandpa?"

"My dear, I never waste time on newspaper poetry; it may be well enough for girls like you, but"—and here Dr. Pulsifer glanced nervously at his sermon-paper—"every moment is precious to a man in my position."

"I know it; I won't bother you more than five minutes," was the careless answer. "This is our Sunday-school paper—you can't say anything against that—and the poem is called 'Barley Loaves.'"

For fear that the doctor was about to refuse to listen, Gertrude put her hand over his mouth and held it there until she had finished.

"Now, isn't it pretty?" she asked.

"Hm-m-m! so-so," was the answer. "Did you write it, that you take such an interest in it?"

"The very idea, grandpa! You know better."

"Then why interrupt my studies, Gertrude, for such a thing?"

The bald spot on Dr. Pulsifer's head grew pink—a sure sign, as his granddaughter knew, that he was getting out of temper, and would presently begin to scold.

"I beg your pardon," she said quite humbly. "I only came to tell you that I showed this to Miss Goodwin, my music-teacher, and she liked it so well that she has written a beautiful tune for it; and if you are willing, I would like so much to have the children learn to sing it in Sunday-school."

"I have no objection, I am sure, but it is really none of my business; you must ask Mr. Horner, the superintendent."

"I did not think of that. Now I will go, grandpa, and let you have time for your sermon." Gertrude went as far as the door while she was speaking, but there she paused again, with the knob in her hand: "Grandpa Pulsifer!"

The doctor's head rose from the hollow of the cushion, where it had naturally adjusted itself the instant he returned to his meditations: "What now?"

"Why don't you ever write sermons like this?—to set people thinking about their duty, I mean?"

"Gertrude," said the doctor, now justly indignant, "I am surprised at you! When I was your age, young folks never dared take their elders to task in that fashion. I will,

however, answer your question. Only three Sabbaths ago I delivered a discourse, which I consider one of my ablest efforts, on the very text with which those verses are headed (John vi. 9). I fear, my dear, that you are growing more inattentive and light-minded than is becoming in a member of my family."

With these words Dr. Pulsifer waved his hand, and Gertrude, with downcast eyes and flushed cheek, withdrew.

One Sunday afternoon not many weeks after this conversation Jerry Ogden was, according to his custom on the day of rest, lounging about the street, with his hands in his pockets, and his ever-restless eyes peering from under his ragged cap in search of a possible chance of fun. Jerry was a merchant. On every working-day he was out betimes in the morning with his box of small wares suspended from his neck, and his keen eyes on the watch, not for fun but for customers. The articles in which Jerry dealt were buttons and shoe-laces, with an occasional variation, such as Magic Blacking, Infallible Ointment, or the latest instrument for threading needles. Jerry did a thriving business, and his energy deserved credit, for it made his mother's cares a good

deal lighter than they otherwise would have been.

Dame Ogden, known in her neighbourhood as "Scolding Sukie," kept a news-stand at a street corner; this yielded a regular income, but as there were two children younger than Jerry to be provided for, there was seldom a penny to spare. The Ogden family rented a room on the third floor of a crazy old house in the lower part of the city.

Jerry had taken a long stroll that afternoon to reach the aristocratic neighbourhood of the Garden street church, over which the Rev. Ambrose Pulsifer, D. D., was pastor. It was the hour for Sunday-school. Jerry caught a glimpse of children's faces through the diamond-shaped panes of the basement windows; he could hear the sound of their voices, too, when all the classes recited in unison. His idea of a Sunday-school was very vague indeed, but he understood it to be a place where rich children went to have a good time. He had watched a good many go in, but nobody seemed to be coming out; his toes, as he stood there leaning against the lamp-post, were getting numb; there was no stocking between them and his shoes, and these were gaping at each side,

presenting the appearance of fresh-roasted chesnuts. He concluded to go home and see what was going on there. Just as he turned to carry this resolution into practice there came a burst of music from the cabinet organ in the Sunday-school. It made Jerry pause. There was a sound of many children rising from their seats, and then the fresh young voices filled the air with singing. The words were not very intelligible where Jerry stood, and if they had been he would have been none the wiser. Now and then he distinguished something about "barley loaves," but he could not make out what that meant; it was the tune he cared for.

"Oh, but that's grand!" whispered the boy to himself. "There ain't one of the hand-organs on our street can come up to that—not even lame Caesar's with that gal o' his'n playing the tambourine. They've stopped. I wish they'd give us another tune."

The wish was a vain one, for "Barley Loaves" had been sung as a closing hymn. Before Jerry had got his numb feet in order for a start the door swung open, and a crowd of children came out. Of course, Jerry did not know it, but the zealous superintendent had just been talking to the scholars on the duty of winning other chil-

dren to come to Sunday-school. He spoke to them of the influence it was in the power of each boy and girl present to exert, and then, to impress his words upon their minds, had set them to singing "Barley Loavès."

Master Edwin Wharton lingered at the gate while he drew on his gloves and arranged his fur collar. He saw Jerry starting off in the direction he himself was about to take, and recognized him instantly as the boy from whom he had bought a box of blacking the week previous.

"Hallo there!" said he, and quickened his pace to catch up with the young merchant.

Jerry paused, and looked back with surprise; having no goods with him to dispose of, he could not understand what this well-dressed boy could want of him.

"I say, you, whatever your name is, do you belong to any Sunday-school?"

Jerry's black eyes snapped, and rested on young Wharton with an expression that said, "What a muff you must be!" but his answer was simply, "No, I don't belong nowheres."

"You had better join our school, then. Mr. Horner says he wants more scholars, and told us to try and find some. I found you the first

thing. Wish you'd come ; it's a first-rate school ; lessons are easy, and the library books splendid ! You'll come, won't you ? If I knew where you lived, I'd stop for you. You see, I'd like to be the first one of 'em all to bring a new scholar."

Jerry meditated a moment before giving a reply. He had learned, poor fellow ! as a matter of self-defence, among the class of people with whom he was thrown, to think twice before he spoke. The attractions brought forward by his companion availed very little to him. Lessons were out of his line altogether, and what were library books worth to him who could barely spell enough to make out the labels on the various articles in which he dealt ? But there was the music ; he would like the chance of hearing that every Sunday ; the room looked bright, and no doubt it was a better place to get warm in than he was usually invited to enter. He liked the idea also of sitting among all those finely-dressed children, and hearing what they had to talk about. And perhaps some of his school-fellows on Sundays would become customers on week-days. On the whole he concluded to go once and try it.

"Yes, I'll jine," said he at last—"that is,"

he added, doubtfully, "if there's nothing to pay. I'm rather short o' tin just now."

"To pay? Oh no, not a cent. I am real glad you'll come. By the way, what's your name? I'd look foolish going up to Mr. Horner to say I had brought a scholar, and not know his name."

"I'm Jeremiah Ogden," said the new recruit with sudden dignity, and drew his ragged cap half an inch farther over his forehead.

Master Edwin Wharton was delighted at gaining his point so easily. He was ambitious of the honour of bringing in the first new scholar, and his anxiety to do this had made him unmindful thus far of certain peculiarities in Jeremiah Ogden's style of dress. As soon as the business was concluded in a satisfactory manner he felt no inclination to continue any longer in such doubtful company; therefore, at the very next corner they came to, Edwin said, "Good-day," and turned off. It took him entirely out of his way, but that did not matter; his dignity was saved.

The following Sunday, true to his word, the young dealer in buttons, shoe-laces, etc., appeared at the door of the Garden street Sunday-school. He was dressed with uncommon

care; his hands and face were clean; his hair nicely combed; he had coaxed his mother into putting a new patch on his trowsers and a stitch or two in his cap, so as to hold rim and crown together. Jerry was a good-looking boy when thus dressed up. He paused at the gate; other children were entering, but no one spoke to him. The boy who had gained his promise to attend either was already inside or had not come yet. Jerry did not like to go in alone; indeed, he had a great mind to turn back and give it up.

A lady came through the gate while he stood thus doubtful; she got as far as the door, then turned back, and with a kind smile, such as he did not see every day, addressed him: "You are coming in, I hope, to join our school?"

Jerry began an examination of his shoes, and was silent.

"I have a class of boys about your age; suppose you come among them to-day. If you do not know the lesson, never mind; you can listen to the others."

The lady's pleasant smile and kind words decided the matter. Jerry nodded his head, and followed her in. She led the way to a long bench where three boys were already

seated. These all stared at Jerry's cap and trousers with something like scorn, and the one nearest him moved as far as the seat would allow from his new neighbour. Had poor Jerry been conscious of the movement, and the feeling which prompted it, he no doubt would have left the room at once, for, being a person in business for himself, he had a good deal of independence about him. The black eyes, however, had so much to occupy them that these manifestations of displeasure wholly escaped their notice. The great map hanging against the wall, the organ, the rows of books behind large glass doors, the bright-coloured pictures of Bible characters,—these all were objects demanding close scrutiny from the new scholar. It was delightfully warm too, and Jerry stretched his limbs with a sense of unbounded comfort. While he was busy making observations the seats were filling up; he caught sight of Master Edwin Wharton standing by the platform and talking eagerly with a gentleman. He pointed his finger toward the part of the room where he (Jerry) was sitting, and the gentleman looked there, nodded, and smiled. Yes, Edwin was telling the superintendent of his successful effort, his barley

loaf. Was it really his loaf, though, or the kind lady's who had turned back and invited this poor boy in simply out of love, and not for the honour of gaining a new scholar?

Before Jerry had finished his examination of all the strange objects about him a little bell struck, and a hush fell over the room. There was a prayer, the first this home-heathen had ever listened to in his life; and then the organ sounded and the children all sang a hymn. If the music had delighted Jerry the week before, standing outside against the lamp-post, to-day, when he was in the very midst of it, and could distinguish every note, every word, his enjoyment was beyond expression.

Then came the lesson; it was the parable of the Talents. The lady wisely avoided asking Jerry any questions; it was enough for him to listen this first day. The other scholars recited a portion of the parable, and then the teacher gave a simple explanation of the whole. The young merchant took in every word. He could understand a business transaction like this—the master committing different sums of money to the care of his servants, and leaving them to make what use they would of it. The lady read the verse, “‘Then he that had received

the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.' ”

“Good for him !” shouted Jerry, whose interest in the story had made him forgetful of everything else.

Some children in a front seat turned round and stared, others giggled, and Jerry, annoyed at having committed an impropriety, drew himself up and resolved not to listen any more. The teacher took no notice of his evident mortification, but went on with her explanations. Soon his interest in the story overcame his pride, and again he was bending over with his shrewd gaze fastened on her face.

“‘But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.’ Now, boys, I want you to tell me what you think of that man,” said the teacher.

“A lazy tike!” burst forth Jerry again. “Don’t I wish I had his chance, though?”

“And so you have, my boy,” was the gentle reply.

The teacher went on to explain the meaning of the parable, striving to impress it upon the boys that each of them had at least one talent in his charge, of which he must give account at the Lord’s coming.

When the school was dismissed, Jerry passed out with the other scholars, feeling a momentary sense of exaltation in being one of such a respectable crowd.

"Hello there, you Jeremiah Ogden!" called a voice just as Jerry passed through the gate. Master Wharton elbowed his way through the other children, and offered his gloved hand to the stranger in a condescending way. "Kept your word, didn't you?"

Jerry nodded.

"Well, what do you think of it in there? Like it, eh?"

"First rate."

"You'll come again, then, won't you?"

"Certain."

"That's right. Remember, Jeremiah, if any one asks how you came to join the school, you are to tell them I brought you in. I am Master Wharton. You understand?"

"All right!" and with an expression which was not so positive as scorn, yet far from complimentary to Master Wharton, the new scholar hastened on his way. The young gentleman had done Jerry a good turn in inviting him to the Garden street Sunday-school, but his sharp wits discerned motives, and the love that fell

from the lips and eyes of his teacher right down into Jerry Ogden's heart had ensured his regular attendance, rather than Master Wharton's selfish proposal.

The following Sunday Jerry was in his seat punctual to the hour. Miss Mitchell, faithful and devoted teacher that she was! rejoiced much over the opportunity thus given her of bringing the glorious news of salvation to such a dark little soul as Jerry's. There was an increase of self-respect in his bearing this time; he had devoted a portion of his week's gains to the purchase of a paper collar; his hair also was well greased, though the perfume was not of any article for that purpose sold in the shops. When, in the most interesting part of the lesson, Jerry's head bent forward, Miss Mitchell was obliged to draw hers back a little. "But no matter," thought she; "it is worth while putting up with such trifles for the sake of a soul."

After this Jerry no longer spent his Sunday afternoons in lounging about the streets. No matter what the weather was or the state of his wardrobe—the latter was often of a doubtful character for Sunday best—he was always in his seat when the little bell on the desk gave

the signal for school to begin. Through the influence of Miss Mitchell he soon began attending a night-school near his home. The change that was wrought in him in one winter was magical. But no! that is not the word, for the blessing of God upon any soul is far more potent than magic.

In the room above that occupied by the Ogden family there lived a solitary woman, a Jewess, known among the other occupants of the house as Aunt Judith. For many years this woman had lived in the same dingy room. She seemed to have neither friends nor relatives; she never sought the society of her fellow-lodgers. If any one met her on the stairs and spoke, she returned a civil answer, but that was all. How she came by the familiar title of "Aunt" nobody knew; to her neighbours it was enough that she had always been called so. This woman, whose infirmities betokened great age, supported herself by the sale of a certain medicine which she had learned to concoct in Germany, her native land. It had virtues to cure every disease that ever was known, if one believed her statement, and the method of its manufacture was a profound secret known only to herself, since the origi-

nator had been dead many years. Aunt Judith prepared this medicine in her own room, and always locked the door. This precaution was unnecessary, for such an awe of the strange old woman and her mysterious medicine had seized her fellow-lodgers that nothing would have induced them even to pause before her door during the operation. They were not to blame, for the odour of the "elixir" while simmering on the stove was more than ordinary noses could endure.

From day to day Aunt Judith went forth on her rounds with her basket of pint bottles. She always returned at night with several less than she had at starting, proving that somebody had been found simple enough to be deluded by her pretensions about the "elixir." It was a hard life for a weak old woman, but for that matter a hard life was accepted as a matter of course by everybody in the house.

Jerry and Aunt Judith frequently passed each other on the stairs, and so a speaking acquaintance was established between them. Once, as they were going up to their respective rooms at the close of the day's work, the tired old woman slipped, and Jerry was just in time to catch the basket and save half a dozen

bottles of the precious "elixir." Aunt Judith was so lamed that she gladly accepted the boy's offer of assistance, allowing him to support her and carry the basket into her room. Nobody had ever been suffered to enter before, and the stories which had been invented about it made Jerry gaze round with a good deal of curiosity. It was a disappointment to find nothing there but ordinary furniture. The chair, table, and bedstead looked just as old and ricketty as those in "Scolding Sukie's" apartment or any other in the house. It was all just about alike; for there is a family resemblance in the furniture of tenement houses, as well as in the dwellings of the wealthy.

Aunt Judith's bruised ankle prevented her from going her rounds for several days, and she gladly accepted Jerry's kind offer to take her basket as well as his own tray, and do what he could in selling the "elixir."

"Was he sure that he could carry both?"

Jerry answered by hanging the tray by its cord around his neck, picking up the basket, and marching two or three times back and forth.

"You are a good child," said Aunt Judith—"a good child. If my Isaac had lived, he

would have been just about as tall." Then the old woman shook her head and kept on talking to herself.

"Was Isaac your son?" Jerry asked.

"My grandchild, boy—the only one, and his mother died before him." Aunt Judith said this in a sorrowful tone, as any other woman bereft of her dearest might have spoken; then all at once she raised her head and looked severely at Jerry.

"Go, boy, go!" and she pointed to the door; "what are you stopping here for?"

Jerry obeyed with as much haste as he could, but stopped outside, holding the door a few inches open, to say he would come for the basket next morning.

In spite of her sharp dismissal, Aunt Judith had taken a great fancy to Jerry. His kindness in disposing of the "elixir" during her confinement to the house increased her liking for him, and so it came about, in course of time, that the lonely old woman and the active boy became firm friends. Sometimes, so strong was the association in her mind between him and her lost grandson, she addressed him as Isaac, and Jerry, supposing that the mistake was a comfort to her, never set her right.

Aunt Judith was a person of more education than is generally found in the class that inhabits tenement-houses. Before her sight failed she had been a great reader of both German and English novels. When Jerry, by faithful attendance at the night-school, had become able to master all except the hardest words in ordinary reading, she produced a pile of cheap books from her box, and set him to reading aloud to her. Neither of them could afford to spend much time in literary pursuits, but they managed, by seizing odd half hours here and there, to get through more than one thrilling romance. The boy enjoyed this as much as his strange old friend, and grew more and more willing to forego his games with those of his own age for the sake of a page or two in the story.

Meanwhile, Jerry's Sunday-school teacher was labouring earnestly both by prayer and effort to open his heart to the love of Christ. It was not easy work : such a home as Jerry's, such examples as were constantly before him, even the business in which he was engaged, had made his heart dry and hard to a degree that would seem shocking to a boy of his age in the higher walks of life. Still, what lock

is there that prayer and patient effort will not open? Certainly no human heart, created by Him who so loved the world that he sent his son to die for it, has a lock so rusty but that these powerful keys will force it at last.

The effect of the gospel in this case was very gradual: it commenced with the paper collar and the hair oil with which Jerry strove to improve his outer man; it next set his mind to work to increase his stock of information; by and by it bore upon his worldly business, and made him careful not to charge a penny more than his just profit on blacking, buttons, or other wares. Finally, it struck deeper yet, this precious knowledge of salvation through Christ, and caused Jerry Ogden to be numbered not only among the members of the Garden street Sunday-school, but as one of the army of blessed ones redeemed through the blood of the Lamb of God. Yet Jerry continued the same bright, fun-loving boy as before; why not? The long-faced boy or girl who thinks it a sin to laugh, and acts as if being a Christian meant holding one's self aloof from all the pleasant things that God has put in the world for our enjoyment, slanders the religion he or she professes. There is a

great deal about "joy" in the Bible, and not a single text, so far as I know, about the holiness of being miserable.

Jerry came home some time before dark one Saturday evening, and thought to please his old friend by reading to her a while. He ran up the long stairs, taking two at a step, and knocked at her door. The voice that bade him enter sounded very weak.

"Hi, Aunt Judith! what's the matter?" was his startled question. The old woman was sitting on one of the rickety chairs, drawn close to the window, engaged in putting labels on her bottles. The fingers trembled as they performed this simple work, and there was a strange paleness on the wrinkled brown face. "Tell me quick, what ails you?" repeated the boy. "You don't look like yourself, Aunt Judith."

The old woman put down the bottle she held, and beckoned to him to come near. "I sha'n't make any more 'elixir,'" she whispered, hoarsely; "this lot of it I give to you; sell it and keep the money. The recipe for making it is in an old pocket-book in the box yonder; here is the key." She took it from her pocket and laid it in the boy's hand.

“What do you mean, Aunt Judith? Do you think you are going to be sick, really? Let me go for some of the women-folks to come and take care of you.”

The old woman laid her trembling hand on his arm. “Don’t go,” she said, still whispering; “I don’t want any one but you here. My little Isaac, I am going to die.”

“No! no! no!” cried the boy, alarmed at these words. “Drink some of the ‘elixir;’ lie down and let me bathe your head; or I’ll get you something to eat. Oh dear! what shall I do first?”

Jerry spun around the room like a top, and with little more idea of what he was doing.

“There’s nothing for you to do, Isaac, good boy. I’m old, old, and the end is very near.”

But the end was not quite so near as Aunt Judith expected. She did not die that night; she lingered several days, growing weaker and weaker until the last, but not suffering. No disease had attacked her; it was simply the wearing out of the body, for she had said truly she was very old. She would allow no one but Jerry to enter her room, persisting in calling him her grandson Isaac. One of the women in the house undertook to make gruel and

broth for her, and whatever else she required. There was money enough to supply all such wants in the purse Aunt Judith gave Jerry for that use. One thing after another she committed to his care, telling him to use them as his own, as they would be when she was gone. Jerry humoured her; he supposed all this grew out of her belief that he was the lost Isaac.

There was a great weight on the boy's mind. It was not only that he was about to lose his friend. He grieved at the thought, but Aunt Judith was so aged and infirm that it seemed only natural she should die. But how would it be with the soul of one who rejected the Lord Jesus? He had tried once and again to coax Aunt Judith into allowing him to read to her from the Gospels, and each time she had angrily dismissed him from the room. During the days that shut these two out from the rest of the world—the narrow bridge, as it were, on which they stood, with their faces turned different ways, one back to time, the other forward to eternity—there grew in Jerry's heart an anxiety that amounted to anguish. He must speak once more, even if the dying woman turned him out of the room again.

“Aunt Judith,” said he.

“What is it, my son?”

“You believe in God, don’t you?”

“Yes,” she answered, fervently, “I believe in the God of my fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

“And in Jesus Christ, the Saviour?” asked Jerry.

There was no answer for a moment, and the old woman’s jaws worked nervously, as if she would speak and could not. At last she said, “Get your Bible and read to me about him. I do not believe; I wish I could, for I have no sacrifice to offer, and my sins are great. You said once that he was sacrificed for us; you called him the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Tell me more, Isaac. I will believe if I can.”

Then Jerry, with a prayer at his heart, got the little Bible Miss Mitchell had given him and read with a faltering voice the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and the closing chapters of Luke. Aunt Judith listened eagerly to it all; and when he closed the book, she whispered, so faintly that he could hardly understand, “Kneel down close beside me, Isaac, and pray to your Jesus to take away my sins too.”

Jerry obeyed with joy, and in simple words

asked God to do for Aunt Judith what he had so lately done for himself—give her a sure hope of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the boy rose, he waited to hear what his friend would say ; no sound or motion came from Aunt Judith. He thought she must have fallen asleep ; so she had, but it was the sleep of death. Jerry stood there in the silence gazing at her. Had his prayer been heard ? Had the aged Jewess in her last moments been brought to trust in the Saviour she had all her life despised ? There was no one to answer these questions.

Jerry called in his mother and the other women of the house, and preparations were soon made for the simple funeral. No one had loved Aunt Judith—for none really knew her—but Jerry ; so there was no pretence of grief, and only one mourner followed the body to its last resting-place.

In the box where all the old woman's treasures were kept was found a will, bearing a recent date, bequeathing all her effects to Jeremiah Ogden, who had taken the place of her beloved grandson in her heart. The inheritance was not a grand one according to the estimation of wealthy people, but Jerry became thereby the


moneyed man of the whole house, and was able to assume the entire care of his family, much to the satisfaction of "Scolding Sukie," his mother.

Being able to invest a larger capital in his business, Jerry grew more and more prosperous, and by steady perseverance and the favour of God he advanced step by step from the tray of shoe-laces, etc., to a well-stocked shop in a good location.

All this grew out of the copy of "Barley Loaves" which Gertrude Pulsifer held in her hand the morning of her unwelcome visit to her grandfather's study.

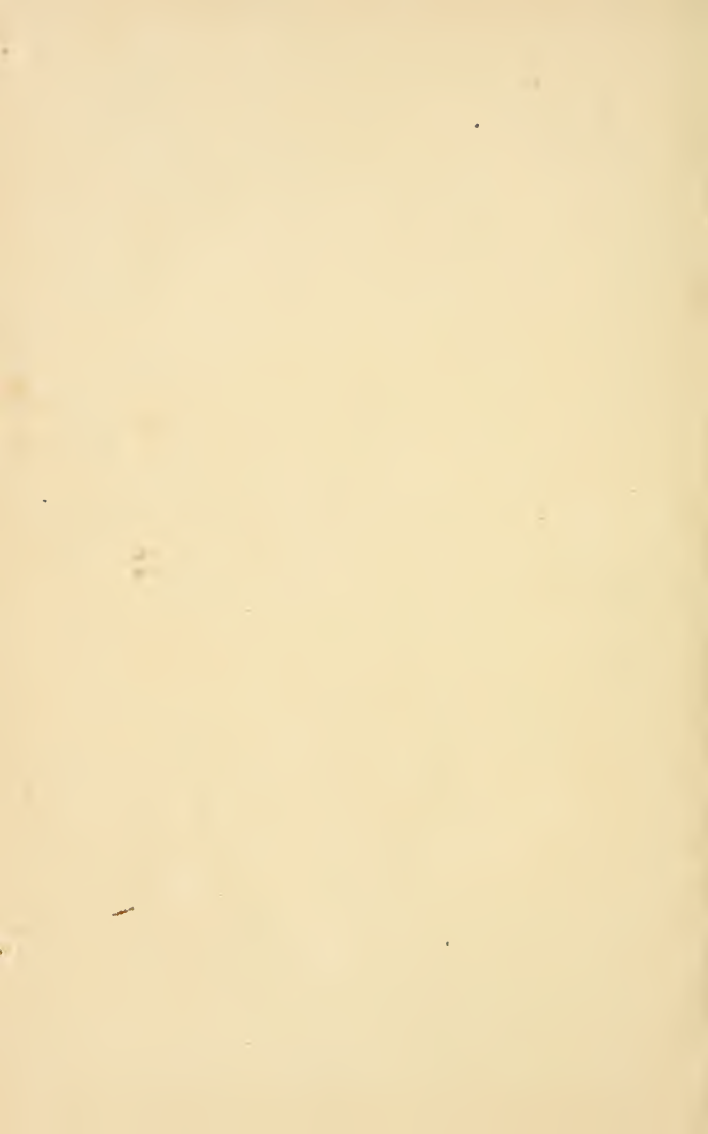
CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

ASSIE MACAULEY never heard of any good that was accomplished by her little poem. She had left it in the Lord's hand, to be used as he saw fit. How he used it for the feeding of souls we have seen ; yet these were only a few cases out of many. The whole number will never be known until the revelations of eternity bring all things to light.

The lesson of "Barley Loaves"—I wonder if I need to tell it here?—is that every little deed brought in simple faith to Jesus for his blessing will be multiplied, we cannot guess how many times ; and that people whose faces we have never seen will be better and happier through our endeavours. May each of my readers, then, like the boys and girls in these stories, seek earnestly to find some opportunity of doing good, and bring it to Jesus for his blessing!





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